

Witness Name: Leon Olszewski

Statement No. WITN7216001

Dated: 15th October 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LEON OLSZEWSKI

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th September 2022. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Leon Olszewski will say as follows:-

1. **Introduction**

1. My name is Leon Olszewski. My date of birth is GRO-C 1984 and my address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I am currently single and have two children. I work as a Plumbing and Heating Engineer.

2. **How Affected**

1. I make this statement in support of my dad, Antoni Olszewski who became infected with hepatitis C after receiving contaminated blood at the Neath Port Talbot Hospital, Neath, Port Talbot.

2. My dad and I have always enjoyed a close relationship.
3. Between the ages of 5 and 16 I played at a local football club and Dad would take me if he was feeling well enough.
4. My dad was travelling home from work at the Port Talbot Steelworks on the 10th February 1986 on his motorbike when he was involved in a collision with a train. (a more detailed account can be found in my dad's witness statement WITN2522001). Amongst other injuries, he sustained extensive injuries to his legs and almost lost them. His jugular vein was also ripped. Dad was taken to Neath & Port Talbot Hospital where he was given approximately 36+ units of blood. It was on this occasion that he was given infected blood.
5. I believe that it would have been impossible for the doctors to inform Dad about the risks of being exposed to infection, as he was admitted as an emergency and went straight into surgery.
6. Through the transfusion(s) and possible blood product(s) my dad received during his operation, he was infected with hepatitis C.
7. Dad found out that he had chronic hepatitis C when he went to donate blood in 1998. Three days after donating his blood, he was contacted by the blood drive and subsequently visited by a person from the Blood Bank in Cardiff who informed him that he had been infected with hepatitis C.
8. I was two years old when Dad had his accident.
9. I am unable to comment on what information was provided to my dad about his infection or whether it was adequate, but my dad's witness statement to the Inquiry contains this information (WITN2522001).

3. **Other Infections**

1. To my knowledge and understanding, Dad did not receive any other infection(s) other than hepatitis C.

4. **Consent**

1. I am unable to comment on this section, and this information is contained within my Dad's witness statement at WITN2522001 for further detail.

5. **Impact**

1. I believe that my dad's infection affected his mental health. He would get very down and depressed when he was ill through taking the treatment. It also took its toll on my parents' relationship. It put them under terrific strain both emotionally and financially.
2. Dad would get frustrated and upset that he was unable to do just the basic things like taking me to school or football club.
3. Mum had to care and do everything for him. We, as a family, understood that Dad had to come first before any of us.
4. It is so sad that Dad missed out on time he could have spent with his children. We will never get this time back.
5. The tension in the home could be felt when Dad was ill. Obviously, the younger siblings did not know what was going on, but they could sense the tension within the family home. The older siblings, who were aware of the nature Dad's illness, were even more worried.
6. When I was about aged 7 or 8 years old, I thought that I would catch the infection from my dad, and for a short time, I avoided having physical contact with him. It was only after my mum and dad explained to me about Dad's infection that my fear subsided.

7. In Dad's early days, before the accident, he was outgoing and sociable and used to enjoy a pint down the local pub. Sometimes he and Mum would go together for a night out, but this stopped because of Dad's illness.
8. Dad used to also enjoy his hobby repairing motorbikes and cars but all that had to stop. He was not physically able to carry on with it.
9. I remember Dad, my brother Troy and I used to ride out on the scrambling motorbikes. We would regularly take the bikes out and ride them in the woods. It was something that we all enjoyed.
10. Even though I was young when Dad was ill, I was aware that he was sick and that his treatment caused terrible side effects. I could see that he would lose weight and have no appetite.
11. I have not had any experience of stigma in relation to my dad's infection. The knowledge that my Dad had the infection was kept within the family. No-one outside the family knew that Dad had hepatitis C. I would not have discussed it with anyone else because people do not understand and are ignorant of the facts.
12. My dad's illness impacted on the whole family but particularly on my eldest brother Christian. He and my dad argued a lot and caused a lot of tension within the family, so much so, that in the end Christian left home at 16. Unfortunately, he went on to get into trouble. He was expelled from school GRO-C.
13. I believe that my education and job prospects were affected by my dad's illness. I was constantly worried about him and believe this distracted me from my studies.

6. **Treatment/Care/Support**

1. I am unable to comment on this Section. This information is contained within my dad's statement WITN2522001 submitted to the Inquiry.
2. No counselling or psychological support has ever been offered to me personally.

7. **Financial Assistance**

1. I unable to comment on this Section.

8. **Other Issues**

1. There is nothing that I wish to add to this section.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed.. GRO-C

Dated... 15/10/22