

Witness Name: Graham Oliver

Statement No: WITN7346001

Dated: 22nd November 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRAHAM OLIVER

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 7th October 2022. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Graham Oliver will say as follows:-

1.Introduction

1. My name is Graham Oliver. My date of birth is GRO-C 1950. My address is known to the Inquiry. I have been married for 32 years to Donna Spence and we work together for a company called Solstock. We are a photography company and we supply photographs exclusively to Getty Images. Donna and I have one other business partner and our company employs 9 staff.

2. I intend to speak about my son Benjamin Graham Oliver ("Ben") who was born on **GRO-C** 1977. **GRO-B**
GRO-B. I also have two daughters: Daisy Oliver and Willow Rose Oliver (19 and 14 years old respectively).
3. I married my former wife Pamela Abbot on **GRO-C** 1972. Together, we are the biological parents of Ben **GRO-B**. In 1987, Pamela and I were divorced. We have co-parented Ben **GRO-B** since then.
4. Around mid-December 1979, I was living in Durham at the time, and I received a phone call whilst I was at work in Newcastle. It was Pamela informing me that Ben had been in an accident and was bleeding uncontrollably. I rushed to Durham Hospital and when I arrived I saw my son Ben, aged 2 or 3 years old at the time, covered in blood. It was through this incident that we were informed that Ben had haemophilia. **GRO-B**
GRO-B
5. Over the next few years, Ben would frequently have a lot of lumps and bumps. I would describe Ben as a little daredevil, he was always very active and often getting himself into trouble due to his risky behaviours. He still has a scar on his nose from falling over when he was a child.
6. Ben's condition meant that we were frequently at the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) Haemophilia Centre. Due to my work commitments at the time, it was usually Pamela who would take Ben to the Haemophilia Centre. She relied to a great extent on the advice and care of Doctor **GRO-D** and the haemophilia nurse Sister **GRO-D**. I recall that both of my sons were required to wear "SOS" necklaces to alert care givers and teachers to the fact they had a bleeding disorder.
7. I recall that the Haemophilia Centre put in place a protocol for our family which would be implemented should either of our sons suffer an injury and incur either

an internal or external bleed. The protocol was centred around the provision of blood products that would be administered to the boys. To the best of our knowledge these products were plasma and factor 8.

8. It would be fair to say that we put all of our faith in Dr [GRO-D] and Sister [GRO-D] to look after our sons to the highest possible standards and we had complete confidence in them.
9. When the boys were both toddlers, Pamela must have attended the Haemophilia Centre at least 2 or 3 times a week whenever it was needed. Our family moved from County Durham to North Tyneside sometime in the early 80s so that we could be closer to the Haemophilia Centre and able to attend quicker should an emergency arise.
10. Both of our boys went to Newlands School which was a private fee paying school. The headteacher was called Mr [GRO-D]. The school was very well rated and respected and we thought, when we decided to send our children there, that it would provide them with the best opportunity for their education and a great start in life. However, our boys endured an appalling incident that took place at the school. It appeared that a nurse who had been seconded to the RVI Haemophilia Centre had discovered the medical records of both of my children Ben [GRO-B] which were kept on file there. This nurse had contacted Mr [GRO-D] (who was aware of their haemophilia) to tell him that because my sons had haemophilia, they would be capable of spreading the HIV virus to other children. This nurse had a child at the school herself and threatened that both and she and the other parents would withdraw their children unless my boys were removed from the school. I remember Pamela returning home from attending the school and informing me that Mr [GRO-D] had told her that as well as being a school, he was trying to run a business, and that bad press could have an adverse effect on the school's finances.
11. Pamela contacted Dr [GRO-D] and told him what had happened. He then went to the school and spoke to Mr [GRO-D] and as a result both our children were

allowed to return to school three days later. Dr GRO-D explained to Pamela that the nurse who had disclosed the medical information had been disciplined and removed from the Haemophilia Centre.

12. Unfortunately, the damage had been done. When Pamela and the boys tried to return to the school, Pamela was ostracized and alienated by the other parents. My sons stopped being invited to play with other children.

13. I recall being extremely angry about this and my priority was to protect my wife and my children. Pamela was desperately upset by this incident and I believe it has taken a long term toll on her anxiety and health in general.

14. We then moved both our children to a local comprehensive school and they did not experience any further stigmatisation or bullying. However, I am unsure as to how much they understood about what had happened at Newlands School and the impact it had on them long term.

15. In around 1985, Pamela and I separated and eventually divorced. The children lived with Pamela. It was difficult when we lived apart because it meant I would have to drive 15 miles each way to take Ben GRO-B to school in the morning. I used to look after Ben every other weekend. However, when Ben was a bit older, in around 1986/1987, he came to live with me GRO-B remained living with Pamela.

2.How Affected

1. As I mentioned above, Ben was always a bit of a daredevil and he enjoyed high risk, adrenalin fuelled activities. He used to vault over the local sand dunes on his bike and constantly get into bumps and scrapes.
2. When Ben was around 18 years old, I was aware that he had been to Rake Lane Hospital in North Tyneside following a bump to his head. Whilst I don't have a lot of information about the incident, I understand that it was disclosed

to Ben on this visit to the hospital that his medical records said that he had hepatitis C. It was not clear from his records when precisely he contracted hepatitis C, when he was tested for it, or how long he had it for. It seems extremely likely that he contracted hepatitis C through the blood and blood products he was given at the Haemophilia Centre by Dr [GRO-D]. Ben did not exhibit any of the other risk factors or alternative routes of infection usually associated with hepatitis C.

3. As far as I know, Ben was not given much information about his infection nor was he advised on how to protect others from contracting the infection (such as his partners).
4. I don't believe Ben was ever given adequate information for him to manage his infection, nor was he given any guidance on what to expect.

3. Other infections

1. As far as I am aware, neither of my sons contracted any other infections as a result of being given infected blood products. However, I cannot be certain of this because Ben's medical records are incomplete.

4. Consent

1. It stands to reason that Ben was tested for hepatitis C without his consent because when he was informed of the diagnosis at Rake Lane Hospital, the Doctor told him that his medical records had a hepatitis C diagnosis on them, inferring that he had been tested some time in the past, only the diagnosis had not been communicated to him previously.
2. I don't know the purpose of his test for hepatitis C and I don't know whether or not he was tested for any other infections around that time. I believe it is likely that he was tested for other infections and potentially for the purposes of research given what we now know about the infected blood scandal emerging and the role of Dr [GRO-D] in that scandal.

5.Impact

1. Ben went through a difficult time as a young adult. After he was around 18 years old, he seemed to go off the rails, and was constantly getting drunk and hurting himself resulting in him having to move out of my home. Ben went to work on a cruise ship taking photographs when he was around 18. When he came home, he attended a Photography School at Newcastle College. He seemed to settle down for a few years and eventually moved to Fuerteventura in the Canary Islands. He worked as a chef, and when he wasn't working, he was pursuing his passion for windsurfing. Ben got really good at windsurfing to an international standard. However, he was frequently hurting himself.
2. I recall one occasion when I was away working in Europe. I received a call from one of Ben's friends informing me he was in hospital in Fuerteventura following a windsurfing accident. I had to stay in Fuerteventura and look after him for around a week.
3. After the accident, Ben came home to the UK for a while, but as soon as he was healthy again, he returned to Fuerteventura. I received another phone call sometime later informing me that Ben had seriously injured his leg whilst in Spain and had to have it rebroken in 22 places.
4. After this accident, Ben came to live in my caravan and required constant care due to the cage fitted around his leg to facilitate his bones healing properly.
5. Ben has never really recovered from this surgery and he remains on several strong pain killers and walks with the assistance of a crutch.

6.Treatment/Care Support

1. I can't really comment on any difficulties or obstacles Ben faced in obtaining treatment, care and support as a consequence of being infected with hepatitis

C. The reason for this, is that Ben was an adult when he finally found out about his hepatitis C, and it appeared that he had naturally cleared the infection. I only know what Ben and Pamela told me about the infection. However, I am not aware of any treatment, care or support received by Ben during this time.

2. As far as I am aware, no counselling or psychological support has ever been made available to Ben or to any other members of the family as a consequence of what happened.

7.Financial Assistance

1. As far as I am aware, Ben has never received any financial assistance whatsoever following his infection with hepatitis C. Because the relevant records which document Ben's hepatitis C infection are no longer available, he has been refused financial assistance.

8.Other Issues

1. It has been difficult to watch my son Ben, whom I love very much, suffer so much throughout his life. He has suffered a number of injuries which affect his mobility and quality of life to this day. However, up until quite recently, I was not really aware of the potential impact that his hepatitis C infection may have had on his quality of life.
2. We are learning now from the Infected Blood Inquiry that the cognitive impact of hepatitis C infection includes fatigue and depression. This makes me wonder whether or not Ben's early years were tarnished by this infection in his blood stream when he was not even aware of it. We have no way of assessing the damage that the hepatitis C infection caused Ben during this time as it was not sufficiently monitored, tested or recorded.

3. I think it is disgraceful that the blood given to my son was being sourced from prisoners, needle users and drug addicts. When I heard about this in the news, I never thought it would happen to my children.
4. I recall that when treatment for haemophiliac children was switched from cryoprecipitate to Factor 8, those products were pitched to families like ours as being a miracle treatment for haemophilia. We were not made aware of the potential risks associated with their use.
5. In hindsight, I think that looking back, when Ben's behaviour seemed to me to be off the rails, I don't know how much his diagnosis affected him at the time. Ben has lived a reclusive life and spends most of his time by himself. The only pleasure he has is when he is able to go back to Fuerteventura where he was happy.
6. I feel angry about the way Ben is now and the fact that he is dependant on pain killers and crutches.
7. I feel guilty about what Ben was put through at his school, and the leak of information from the Haemophilia Centre to the school. I placed him in that school because I believed it would give him the best possible start in life. When I thought it couldn't get any worse, I then find out that the Haemophilia Centre infected my son with hepatitis C. I feel thoroughly let down by what happened to Ben and I also feel guilty that I trusted professional people like Dr GRO-D, GRO-D and Mr GRO-D protect him and they failed to do so.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-C

Dated.....*22/11/2022*.....