

Witness Name: Susan Rush  
Statement No: WITN7594001  
Exhibits:0  
Dated: December 2022

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SUSAN RUSH

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I, Susan Rush will say as follows: -

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Susan Rush. I was born on GRO-C 1956. I live at GRO-C GRO-C Spain.
2. I am married and in employment.
3. I was infected with Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) via contaminated blood transfusions due to haemorrhaging from an infection in or around the early 1980s in Northampton General Hospital (NGH).
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records. I received an email on Monday 12 December 2022 advising that my UK medical records had been destroyed. I confirm that I am in receipt of my Spanish GP records.

## **Section 2. How infected**

5. I was infected with HCV via contaminated blood transfusions which I received at the NGH as a result of haemorrhaging from an infection in or around the early 1980s.
6. The circumstances surrounding this were that I had had a procedure following a miscarriage a few days before at the NGH and, unfortunately, they had left a swab inside me, which caused an infection. I was then discharged home and after a couple of days severely haemorrhaged. My ex-sister-in-law called an ambulance as I had passed out due to the loss of blood. My two children were very young at the time, I think they were about 1 year and 6 months old.
7. As far as I can recall I was given no information or advice regarding the risk of infection from blood transfusions. I was passed out for much of the time, and I believe that the situation was very serious as I only had about 4 pints of blood left in my body due to the severity of the haemorrhage.
8. I believe that my first positive HCV test was in December 2011 and that I was told about my HCV infection in or around 2013.
9. I think I started to feel forever tired in the late 1990s and throughout the 2000s but as one does, I put this down to family commitments and working hard. However, as time passed, I became more and more irritable, and my skin was itchy. This went on for a long time. I was being investigated by my GP and as far as I was concerned, they were doing straightforward blood tests. At no point was I ever told that I was having a blood test for test for Hepatitis C/HCV/Hep C.
10. In or around 2013 I attended my Spanish GP and he said something like “*you do know you have got Hepatitis C, don’t you?*”, I was incredibly shocked; I actually felt completely speechless. I was given no information or advice regarding the ramifications of what being infected with HCV would mean to

me. I was simply referred to a gastro specialist at the local hospital. My GP was a very old traditional doctor, who actually wasn't particularly pleasant. I would sum the appointment up as *"this is what you have got, here is your referral, and now wait for your appointment at the hospital"*. I went home in a state of shock and researched to find out everything I could about this infection. I thought *"what the hell has happened here and how on earth have I caught this?"* I was speaking to my ex-sister-in-law, who worked in nursing, who said *"what about those blood transfusions?"*. It suddenly made sense to me then as there was no other way that I could have possibly become infected with HCV.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

11. Apart from HCV, I don't believe that I was infected with any other infections as a result of the contaminated blood transfusions.

### **Section 4. Consent**

12. I know that I was tested for HCV without my knowledge and consent.
13. I don't know if I was tested for any other viruses without my knowledge and consent.
14. I don't know whether I was tested or treated for the purposes of research without my consent and knowledge.

### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

15. I suffered with insomnia, irritability, weepiness, tiredness and muscle fatigue as a result of my HCV infection. Physically the HCV just drained me to the point that I was exhausted all the time. On top of this, I couldn't sleep as I was worried about HCV; it was frightening, and I didn't know what long term effects it would have or what sort of a future I was going to have.

16. I did disclose to my close friends and family that I was infected with HCV. This was mainly because when I underwent the HCV treatment in 2013, which consisted of Interferon and Ribavirin, I lost my hair and was incredibly sick. How I looked most definitely resembled a cancer patient. I lost a lot of weight, I was down to only 6 stones, and became extremely gaunt. It was so obvious that I was ill. I think those who weren't so close to me, and my wider circles, just assumed that I had cancer, but those close to me knew the truth. HCV is not a nice thing and with it comes enforced secrecy due to the very real fear of how others would treat you if they knew the truth.
17. The HCV treatment itself was gruelling and was scheduled to last for 12 months. My husband injected me every day and I was too sick to work. I was unbelievably exhausted to the point that I could not even hold conversations with people. I had to give my half of an air conditioning business; I was in partnership with someone. This was upsetting and also led to an inevitable knock-on effect on the family finances at a time when I was severely struggling with the horrific side effects of the treatment. The treatment also led to me developing bad anaemia which did not help matters.
18. I was taken off the treatment after 9 months due to the severity of the side effects but thankfully when I was tested at 9 months, the levels of HCV were undetectable in my system.
19. All in all, 2013 was a difficult year for our family as it was also the year that my husband lost his father. Both my husband and my daughter cared for me during the treatment and my husband also had his own business to run.
20. Following the treatment and once I regained my weight, I was able to get back to work starting with helping my husband with the paperwork for his business.
21. Even today, I still feel tired. Sometimes I wonder whether it is the HCV or the treatment itself which has left me with lifelong tiredness and lethargy.
22. I am unsure as to the long-term damage which has been caused to my liver. Sometimes I suffer with a funny sensation in my liver, and I do undergo regular blood tests and have had scans for my liver.

### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

23. I have never faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care or support in consequence of my HCV infection. I have been treated very well by the medical professionals, who have all been kind and sympathetic, throughout my dealings with them.

24. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support in consequence of my HCV infection.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

25. I have never received any financial assistance from any of the Trusts or Funds set up to distribute payments. I wasn't aware that such support existed, and I had never heard of the Trusts or Funds until very recently.

26. I confirm that I am now making an application for the same to EIBSS.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

27. I would like the Inquiry to ensure that this tragedy is never allowed to happen again.

**Anonymity**

28. I do not wish to apply for anonymity.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed.....

GRO-C
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Dated.....20/12/22.....