



Witness Name: Robert Abell Worsley
Statement Number: WITN0331001
Exhibits: WITN0331002& WITN03310031
Dated: 22/10/18

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ROBERT ABELL WORSLEY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 22 October 2018. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, ROBERT ABELL WORSLEY, will say as follows: -

1. Introduction

- 1.1. My name is Robert Abell Worsley but I am known as 'Robin'. My date of birth is GRO-C 1939 and I am a retired farmer. I am a widower and lost both wives (predeceased) many years ago. I have two daughters, my eldest lives in New Zealand with her two children and the other is living locally with her little boy.
- 1.2. I currently volunteer as a garden guide at a stately home and I like to do whatever I can to give back to the community. I feel there is no reason why we all cannot help one another out wherever we can. My motto in life is 'forever, for everyone'.

2. How Infected

- 2.1. As a young adolescent I was always an avid rugby player and played for Gloucester. During one game in particular I had a terrible accident and damaged the cartilage in my right knee quite significantly and this caused some difficulty in the years that followed.
- 2.2. Consequently, in June 1991 I underwent a procedure at Yeovil District Hospital called a femoral osteotomy to resolve my knee problems and this simply involved cutting the femur in half to allow the knee to rest

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in a different place. I do not believe hospitals do this procedure any longer as I was told it was quite a dangerous procedure.

- 2.3. During my operation in June 1991 I was given a blood transfusion which is the only transfusion that I can recollect ever having since childhood. I may have had a transfusion when I was 21 years old during a tracheotomy procedure which occurred as a result of falling under a tractor whilst farming but that was over 50 to 60 years ago.
- 2.4. I believe I was infected with Hepatitis C in June 1991 when I had the transfusion as a result of the femoral osteotomy procedure.
- 2.5. I was not made aware of the risks of infection via blood transfusions prior to receiving it. I was told after the procedure that I had been given a blood transfusion.
- 2.6. I have never had any tattoos or piercings and I have never taken any intravenous drugs.
- 2.7. In August 1995 I had a letter from the Blood Transfusion Service which said that they were doing a 'lookback programme' and advised that I visit my GP in order to obtain more information. Upon visiting the GP the doctor believed I could be amongst those that had been given infected blood and they tested my blood to ascertain if this was the case.
- 2.8. The blood test came back positive for Hepatitis C and I was referred to Yeovil District Hospital for a biopsy in September 1995. The results of the biopsy came back in December of the same year and it showed that I had significant scarring on my liver which was a result of Hepatitis C.
- 2.9. At the time of my diagnosis in December 1995, my eldest daughter was working for one of the big drug companies producing Interferon. In her line of work she discovered that I needed to be at the Royal Exeter as she said it was the best hospital to go to in terms of care in my area. So I began treatment under the liver specialist unit in the Royal Exeter and I was there as an ongoing outpatient.
- 2.10. From 1995 onwards I had regular blood tests, fibro scans and ultrasounds until August 2017 when I was told I was clear of Hepatitis C and discharged from the clinic by the hepatology doctor at Exeter Hospital.

3. Other Infections

- 3.1. I was never told that I had contracted any other infections separate to Hepatitis C and as far as I am aware I did not have any other infections.

4. Consent

- 4.1. I consented to the femoral osteotomy procedure in June 1991 but I was not made aware of the risks of infection prior to receiving the blood transfusion as I only discovered I received a transfusion after the operation had taken place.
- 4.2. I do not believe I was part of any research programme for blood testing.

5. Impact

Mental Impact:

- 5.1. I was not informed that I was infected with Hepatitis C until I received a letter from the Blood Transfusion Service regarding a 'lookback programme' in August 1995. I then attended an appointment at the GP in September 1995 which confirmed that I had indeed been infected.
- 5.2. The doctor at my GP Surgery had researched the whole thing properly and carefully and he explained that I had contracted Hepatitis C and it was highly infectious and could be passed on to others.
- 5.3. Quite frankly, the mental impact of having Hepatitis C has been quite terrible. It has honestly been like living with a 'time bomb' that could erupt at any time. I have had to live through it for a number of years through no fault of my own.
- 5.4. With medical matters we have been taught to trust the doctors and take whatever they say as what is best, whether it is right or wrong. To an extent our lives are practically in their hands. In this case if there was a test that was available to screen blood for Hepatitis C and it was not used then it is just criminal.

Physical Impact:

- 5.5. As I said earlier Hepatitis C did not affect me physically at all. I would never have even known I had been infected if I did not receive the 'lookback programme' leaflet in 1995.
- 5.6. Having Hepatitis C treatment did not prevent me from doing any tasks. I was rather active and still worked on the farm. Going to the hospital for treatment did not cost me much financially apart from the train fare to the hospital.

Impact on Family Members

- 5.7. There has not been any impact on my family at all. They have been very sympathetic and they have all agreed that I should get compensation for all that I have endured.

6. Treatment/Care/Support

- 6.1. As far as I am aware I do not believe there were any complications with my treatment.
- 6.2. I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C in December 1995 but according to a letter from Royal Exeter Hospital I did not commence treatment until 2004. I cannot remember ever being told the reason behind the delay in receiving treatment and I cannot recall what happened in the intervening time.
- 6.3. In 2004 I began a combined dosage of Interferon and Ribavirin for the treatment of Hepatitis C and I was forewarned of the horrid effects the drugs would have on my body. I had numerous dosages of both Interferon and Ribavirin from 2004 that lasted for approximately 3-4 months. It was rather nasty and I was told not to drive due to the medication so I would get the train down to the hospital.
- 6.4. I witnessed many others in the clinic suffer quite badly from the same treatment and I understand that other participants in this Inquiry have also suffered immensely.
- 6.5. However through my course of treatment I did not feel anything untoward at all. I put this down to the fact that I was born on a farm and I am a farmer's son and have been a farmer myself so I have a fairly strong immune system and there is not many things that can get past me in that respect.
- 6.6. So as of today I can say the treatment did not have a grave effect on me physically.
- 6.7. The Lead Hepatology Nurse at the Clinic in the Royal Exeter use to tell me how lucky I was. She had routine shifts in UK prisons and she would describe rather graphically how the inmates would freely inject drugs and that there was a world of other terrible infections that I could have contracted. It was absolutely shocking.
- 6.8. Overall, I was treated fairly well through my course of treatment. The staff at The Royal Exeter Hospital were tremendous and they did not deny me any treatment or care. They were usually able to get me in for same-day treatment along with ultrasounds and blood tests. Usually I was out within an hour or later on the same day.

- 6.9. The Royal Exeter were quite organised in arranging all my outpatient appointments. I do not have a bad word to say about the treatment I received under their care.
- 6.10. I have shown the investigators a letter from the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital dated 23 August 2017 that details much of the illness and treatments that I have had in relation to Hepatitis C. The letter has 2 pages which are exhibited as WITN0331002 & WITN0331003.

Stigma:

- 6.11. I made no secret about having Hepatitis C to my friends and family. I did not go around telling everyone about it but nevertheless there was no impact on my social life.
- 6.12. The only stigma I feel I ever received was from the British Liver Trust. They wanted me to be on television to explain what I had gone through with the whole infected blood scandal and they interviewed me so I could 'make a case'. Unfortunately I was not considered "angry enough" to go on television as they felt I couldn't deliver the impact they desired.

7. Financial Assistance

- 7.1. I received a letter from the Skipton Fund offering me financial support shortly after receiving the 'lookback programme' leaflet in 1995. Prior to that I had not heard about the Fund so I don't believe I would have known about it if I did not receive the letter.
- 7.2. I subsequently applied for assistance through the Skipton Fund and I was given a significant lump sum payment but I cannot remember the exact amount I was given. I believe it to have been in the region of £20,000-30,000.
- 7.3. Separate to the lump sum, I currently receive £333.33 each month from the Skipton Fund.

8. Other Issues

- 8.1. I am really cross about this whole issue as it should never have happened.
- 8.2. I cannot remember where I heard this but I am aware that there was a test available for Hepatitis C when this all first occurred yet for some reason it was not used when it could have saved lives.

- 8.3. I recently met a woman that I now volunteer with and she told me when she was 19 years old she lived in Greece and she would sell her blood and live on the money she received from it.
- 8.4. I wasn't aware that this issue was so far-reaching, even as far as Europe. But I understand that the sale of blood was more prevalent in North America back then.
- 8.5. I'm glad that this Inquiry is happening now but it has just taken so long. Why has it been scrubbed under the carpet for so long? I am lucky as having Hepatitis C and the accompanying treatment did not affect me physically but what about all those people that have suffered greatly as a result of being infected?
- 8.6. I have certainly been affected mentally by all this. Thankfully in December 2017 I was told I was fully clear from Hepatitis C but as mentioned earlier, in the years before that it was like living with a 'time bomb' and constantly waiting for it to go off.
- 8.7. Lastly, I am happy for my name to be on the record. I would prefer not to speak out but if I have to I most certainly will. I want to hear about others like myself that didn't have any physical effects of treatment.
- 8.8. One of the key questions I have relates to the timing of this Inquiry. Why did it take a long time to get to this stage? I am glad to hear that we are looking to determine whether there was indeed a cover up.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____

GRO-C

Dated _____

09/11/2018