

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SUSAN ELIZABETH HARRISON

I, Susan Elizabeth Harrison, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Susan Elizabeth Harrison. I was born on the **GRO-C** 1950 and live at **GRO-C** **GRO-C** with my husband. I am retired.
2. I was infected with the Hepatitis C (HCV) as a result of being given contaminated blood products.
3. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.**

Section 2. How Infected

4. My mother suffered from Von Willebrand's disease and died in September 1976. The doctors at the time recommended to my brother and I that we both be tested to see if we suffered from any blood related problems.
5. In October 1976 I went to the Sheffield Royal Infirmary to be tested. The test consisted of the nurse taking a measure of my blood, then injecting me with a similar amount of Factor VIII. Then numerous times over the next 12 hours, a blood sample was taken and checked to see how long it took to clot. Following this test I was not contacted by the hospital. This

- was the only blood product I have ever received in my life. I had never experienced any bleeding problems at this point in my life and considering I was 26 years old, the test and the way it was carried out seemed strange.
6. I assumed if there was any problem the hospital would contact me. But I never heard anything further from them.
 7. I was not given any information or advice beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection from blood products.
 8. How I found out I was infected with HCV was extraordinary. My husband and I were purchasing a holiday home in Northern Cyprus ("Cyprus") in 2005. We had put the deposit down on the property and when completed (February 2008) were looking to use it as soon as possible, for holidays.
 9. In May 2008, we both drove over in one car with the intention of leaving it there in Cyprus and then catching a flight back to England, after the summer. In order to be able to import the car into Cyprus, we needed a temporary residence card, and to obtain this we needed to take a blood test. We had our blood tests carried out at a local laboratory in Cyprus.
 10. When the results of my blood test came back, I was told I had tested positive for HCV. This was the first time I was aware of my HCV infection. I was informed by the police that I had to report to a local police station **GRO-D** who owned and ran the laboratory knew I was married and explained to my husband and I about HCV but the information was not adequate.
 11. I attended the local Police station on a Friday and was told to surrender my passport and that I had to remain in custody until I was deported. The threat of being imprisoned and deported, because I was HCV positive(through no fault of my own) made me pass out, due to the sheer shock of the situation. After I came round, I was released and told "to go home and wait for the Army to come to arrest and then deport me".
 12. We arranged a flight home from Southern Cyprus and my husband went to the police station on the Monday morning and showed the police officer the flight tickets we had purchased and the police agreed to arrange for my passport to be delivered to the border

post where we intended to cross into Southern Cyprus. My husband and I chose an early morning flight so as to not cause too much upset and embarrassment for ourselves. We arrived at the border and I had to then sign a document in Turkish, with the only English stating that I was an 'undesirable immigrant' to obtain the return of my passport.

13. When I eventually arrived back in England, I was referred to the Infectious Diseases department at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield, for treatment for my HCV.

14. I was provided with a great deal of information about managing HCV and the risks of others being infected with HCV by the department staff.

15. Both of my sons have also had to be tested for HCV and the wait for the results was very traumatic. Fortunately they were given the all clear for HCV.

16. I was never told by the NHS about the infected Factor VIII they gave me, so during the time between my infection in 1976 and when I was diagnosed in 2008 I could have infected my husband, children, and many others.

Section 3. Other Infections

17. I have not received any letters about infections from the NHS regarding vCJD.

Section 4. Consent.

18. I did give consent for my blood test. However, I was never given any information about why I was being tested or what I was being tested for. I was never told about the ramifications.

19. I believe was treated without being given full information about the risks associated with blood products. I am not sure if I was tested for the purposes of research. In addition there appear to be no record of me receiving the infected batch of Factor VIII which I find very bizarre.

20. I explained the test procedure to Professor McKendrick who was treating me for the HCV and he was of the view that I had definitely had the blood test in question because I knew the intricate details of the test.

Section 5. Impact

21. I was extremely shocked when I found out I was infected with HCV and then being threatened with deportation, I could barely keep myself together. In the first few months of being told, I did not want to even touch anyone. I felt dirty and disgusting. These feelings were made worse because the media portrayed HCV infected people as drug addicts, who had caught the virus from sharing needles.
22. Before the HCV diagnoses', I suffered from depression, insomnia, mood swings, stress, anxiety, stomach pains and general fatigue and I would go to my GP and he could find nothing wrong. I had a broad range of symptoms that impacted on me severely, both physically and mentally.
23. In 2009 I began treatment, with Interferon and Ribavirin to try and clear the HCV. The side effects of the treatment were horrendous. I became more depressed, and I suffered from nausea, headaches, thinning hair, itchy skin, flu like symptoms, and I would often pass out due to exhaustion. I also suffered from awful dental problems. After 40 weeks, as the treatment had not cleared the HCV it was extended for another 24 weeks. When I was told they were going to extend the treatment I turned to my husband and said "All I want to do is go to sleep and never wake up again". It was at this point I was prescribed anti depressants (which I still take) . At this time I did not know how much longer I could continue with the treatment.
24. When I finally finished the treatment I had to have another blood test. I then had to wait for around 6 months before thankfully being told I was clear of the HCV. The entire experience was awful. I would not wish it on anyone. I was living with a constant cold throughout the course of my treatment; my body was entirely run down and exhausted and my nose never stopped running.
25. The effects of the treatment on my private, family and social life were immense. I pretty much had no social life. It had a huge impact on my husband and our relationship and I believe that he deserves a medal for what he has had to put up with.
26. I was ashamed of myself, the media portrayed HCV as a 'drug addict's disease. I had not done anything wrong yet I felt like a villain. Our retirement plans were curtailed for at least three and a half years as I could not go back to Northern Cyprus. I had to endure the most harrowing experience of being threatened with imprisonment and deportation.

27. I plucked up the courage to tell my family and I am so lucky to have such a supportive group of family and friends around me. They were absolutely brilliant and helped me through my treatment. I do not know what I would have done without them.
28. I was not subjected to any stigma back in England. Although I was of course threatened with deportation in Cyprus which was absolutely horrendous and very frightening.
29. I started working in 1972 as a teacher. However in 1988 I retrained and started work as Teacher in Charge of a Nursery School. Between 2003 and 2006 I had many months off work due to illness as detailed in paragraph 22 above.
30. I had to go part time and give up my management role at the school I worked at. This meant my salary and pension were impacted significantly. My husband and I chose to sell the house we were living in and move to a cheaper house so we did not have a mortgage. As a consequence it meant I could work part time and hopefully begin to feel better, which unfortunately did not succeed
31. I had to retire 3 years early which again, impacted on my pension. I also delayed drawing down my teachers pension for about 2 years after I retired in order to make it last longer.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

32. I did not have any difficulties in obtaining support or treatment. Including at the dentist.
33. Unfortunately, when I have had surgery in the past, I have been at the end of the waiting list for that particular day. I was asked by the hospital to come in the morning and sit around for a number of hours until all the other surgery had been completed. I suspect this was because the medical professionals did not want to re-sterilise the theatre.
34. I have been offered counselling and psychological support. I was also introduced to a social worker at the Royal Hallamshire Hospital. I attend counselling sessions every week throughout my treatment course and a number of years after. The staff at the Royal Hallamshire were absolutely brilliant.

35. Oddly enough, I have never been called back for monitoring or liver scans. I believe that I have not been monitored at all.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

36. In late 2008, I was told about the Skipton Fund by Professor McKendrick. I then received a stage one payment of £20,000 on the 17th February 2009. However, in order to receive this payment, I had to sign a waiver of my rights to not sue the NHS.

37. I did not receive monthly payments from the Skipton Fund. Having said that, on 15th December 2018, I received a back payment of £8,696.83. I now receive monthly payments from the EIBSS. I also receive a winter fuel allowance of £519.

38. I have not experienced any difficulties when applying for these payments and there were no preconditions imposed.

39.

NOT RELEVANT

Section 8. Other Issues

40. It should not have taken this long for a Public Inquiry to be set up to deal with this horrific scandal. With the amount of cover ups attempted by the NHS and the Government, someone needs to be held accountable. People are dead because of the carelessness of some individuals.

41. I must ask why no one has been imprisoned as of yet? It is disgusting that I have been infected with HCV, threatened with deportation and had my retirement put on hold because of a blood test that I did not even have to have.

42. Finally, it is also shocking that I have not been tracked down and monitored by the NHS. I believe that is because they were keen to cover this up.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

43. I do not wish to apply for anonymity. I understand that this statement will be published and disclosed a part of the inquiry. I would like to give oral evidence.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed. GRO-C

Dated.....10/04/19.....