

Witness Name: Doctor Abraham Karpas

Statement No: WITN0684034

Exhibits: WITN0684035

Dated: 1 September 2023

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DR ABRAHAM KARPAS

I provide this statement in response to the Written Statement of Dr Philip Paul Mortimer [WITN7105001] dated 6 September 2022.

I, Dr Abraham Karpas, will say as follows: -

Section 1: Introduction

1. My name is Dr Abraham Karpas. My date of birth is GRO-C 1937 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am an expert in some aspects of Medical Virology, having trained first as a veterinary surgeon at Zurich University, completing my studies in 1963; later I received a doctorate in veterinary medicine.
2. After working for 6 months as a vet I took a position in a laboratory of Medical Virology at the Department of Microbiology of Geneva University Medical school. A year later I got a French Government Research Fellowship in Virology at the Institute Pasteur in Paris. Thereafter I held a postdoctoral research post in virology at Harvard Medical School in Boston, USA. Subsequently, I was an Assistant Professor to Dr Albert Sabin (developer of the oral polio vaccine) at the University of Cincinnati in the USA. In 1969 I moved to Cambridge to take up the post of Assistant Director of Research in the Department of Haematology at Cambridge University Clinical School. I held this post until October 2005, when I retired according to university statutes.
3. My published research was awarded a Doctor of Science (Sc.D) by Cambridge University in 1982 and I was subsequently offered membership of Trinity College and a fellowship at Wolfson College.

A response to Dr Philip Paul Mortimer

4. I have only recently learned of, and was able to read, Dr Philip Mortimer's statement of September 2022 in which he denies my accusations about his personal responsibility for the six month delay in the approval and introduction of the early screening test for HIV. The delay must have led to great numbers of avoidable HIV infections and deaths in the UK, but he appears to regard these without much compunction as demonstrated by his 2023 article in the *Spectator*: "How Much Compensation Should Contaminated Blood Victims Get?" [WITN0684035].
5. In my statement [WITN0684019] I drew attention to the article entitled "Ministers Delay Launch of AIDS Test" published in the *New Scientist* of 8 August 1985 [DHSC0000509]. Since that ministerial decision could only have been taken after medical advice, I realised that it pointed the responsibility at Mortimer. If, as he strongly asserts, and I am prepared to accept, he received no personal benefit from it, I believe it was in the interest of his close friend, Professor Richard Tedder, who had a personal and financial stake in delaying the introduction of the American 'Abbott' test in March 1985.
6. In the *New Scientist* article [DHSC0000509] Abbott's representative is quoted as saying the delay in Abbott's approval was to give Wellcome Diagnostics time to develop their test; only when this had been completed was Abbott's test accepted. There was no overwhelming merit in one as against another, both registering high rates of false positives needing confirmation such as Western blots; Mortimer's statement tends to imply otherwise, as if this was the important element imposing delay.
7. Wellcome's test was based on licences from Tedder and Weiss. In the event, what Weiss claimed to be "his" AIDS virus isolate CBL-1 proved to be French, covered by a non-commercial use agreement with Montagnier (Institut Pasteur). What Weiss claimed to be his CEM human T cell-line was not developed by him but in America in 1965 by Dr George Foley.
8. In his statement [WITN7105001] (para.119) Mortimer says that he does not recall when or if he ever carried out an evaluation on my cell test for HIV infection (published in the *Lancet* in 1985 [WITN0684007]). This is particularly unfortunate seeing that when it was still fresh in his memory he declined to answer questions about it then. The documentation is ample and is worth recapitulating.
9. In May 1987 I contacted Mortimer and he agreed for me to come to his laboratory in Colindale with my test for its evaluation and introduced me to Dr Gary Bayliss, suggesting I show him how to perform the test and leave sufficient test slides and reagents with him for the panel of sera that was to be used for the evaluation.
10. In the second week of June 1987 his office sent me a copy of the Interim Report (signed also by him) to Mr David Kennedy, DHSS on The 'Karpas Aids Cell Test Kit' (Fuji Chemical Industries Ltd) and also copied it to Mr Wickland of the World Health

Organisation (WHO) Geneva [WITN0684031]. All the HIV-positive sera of the panel recorded positive in my cell test; there were no false negatives.

11. In mid-June 1987 Professor Tedder wrote to me asking me to provide him with my AIDS cell test for evaluation. Since the formal evaluation report on my test had now been documented with copies at the DHSS (Mr David Kennedy [WITN0684031]) and WHO (Mr. Wickland) I felt no misgiving in forwarding a copy of it to Tedder.
12. It appears to have been a grave mistake to have sent Professor Tedder a copy of the Interim Report [WITN0684031]. I did it not only because I was not aware about the close friendship of Mortimer and Tedder but also because it never occurred to me that a director of a UK state laboratory, who signed a formal report to the DHSS with copies also to the World Health Organization, would change the data just to please a friend.
13. A few weeks later I received a draft of the final report of my test from Mortimer's office and noticed with surprise that several sera recorded as positives in the Interim Report had been changed to negatives, making my test unreliable, thus unusable in the UK, and removing a potential competitor to the Wellcome test.
14. In great indignation I contacted Mr David Kennedy of the DHSS. He came to see me in Cambridge and suggested a meeting with Mortimer, to which I agreed, but in which Mortimer refused to take part.
15. I then approached the science reporter of *New Scientist*, Steve Connor, giving him copies of the Interim Report [WITN0684031] and a draft of the final report. Mortimer refused to talk to Steve Connor. Connor approached Chris Smith, MP, who raised questions in the House of Commons, and he reported the affair in the *New Scientist* under the heading, "Health Officer 'Altered' Data on AIDS Test" [HSOC0007665].
16. I also showed it to Professor Raymond Dwek, FRS of Oxford University, a collaborator on AIDS research at the time, who wrote to Dr J Smith Director of the PHLS laboratories in Colindale [WITN0684002], stating: "I am very concerned by the discrepancy between the Interim Report and the draft of the Final Report".
17. My lawyer also wrote to Mortimer but told me that without concrete proof that Mortimer had changed data out of friendship for Tedder there was no way of proceeding in English law.

The Karpas AIDS Cell Test

19. My test was offered to Japan in 1986 [WITN0684033] where high standards of quality control did not allow the possibility of tampering. It was examined, approved and produced by the Japanese Diagnostic company, Denka Seiken, and has been marketed for many years there as the "Karpas AIDS Cell Test".

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated 1 September 2023

Table of exhibits:

Date	Notes/ Description	Exhibit number
6 September 2022	Written Statement of Dr Philip Paul Mortimer	WITN7105001
29 May 2023	<i>Spectator</i> article by Dr Philip Mortimer, "How much compensation should contaminated blood victims get?"	WITN0684035
20 September 2020	Second Written Statement of Dr Abraham Karpas	WITN0684019
8 August 1985	<i>New Scientist</i> article, "Ministers delayed launch of AIDS test"	DHSC0000509
18 July 1987	<i>Lancet</i> article, "Use of Karpas HIV Cell Test to Detect Antibodies to HIV-2"	WITN0684007
June 1986	Interim report to Mr David Kennedy of the DHSS on the "Karpas AIDS Cell Test Kit"	WITN0684031
14 July 1988	<i>New Scientist</i> article, "Health officers 'altered' data on AIDS test"	HSOC0007665
3 November 1988	Letter from Professor R A Dwek, Director of the Oxford Glycobiology Unit to Dr J Smith, Director of the PHLS Laboratories in Colindale.	WITN0684002
28 August 1986	<i>New Scientist</i> article entitled, "Japan buys British 'litmus test' for AIDS" by Steve Connor.	WITN0684033