

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name:

Statement No.: WITN0859001

Exhibits: **WITN0859002 - WITN0859003**

Dated: 21/06/19.

**INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 12 March 2019.

I,  will say as follows: -

**Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is  My date of birth is  1959 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I intend to speak about my late father,  who was infected with Hepatitis B Virus ("HBV") through a blood transfusion he received in 1971.
2. I am married to  () and we have two adult daughters. I am an only child and I lived with my parents until  and I married in 1982. I am now retired but I previously worked in office-based roles, including for a local electricity board and, most recently, doing secretarial work at a primary school.

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3. My father was born on GRO-B 1932. He had two brothers, one older and one younger. My father's father was in the army and his mother died when he was 13 years old. As a result, my father and his brothers were split up between various aunts and uncles. He was never bitter about this but he had a somewhat disjointed childhood.
4. My father went to a grammar school and then did an Engineering apprenticeship. After completing two years of national service in Germany, he was employed as a draughtsman by a local engineering firm. Throughout his life, he worked at a few different engineering firms but his final position was at the Rolls Royce plant in Ansty, Coventry.
5. My father married my mother on GRO-B 1958 and a year later, I was born. He appreciated married life and was a lovely father. I was very close to him. He was mild-mannered, easy-going and had a good sense of humour.
6. My mother kept diaries while my father was unwell and these contain a thorough record of his hospital admissions and how his illness progressed. I have referred to these diaries when drafting this statement, particularly for the purpose of remembering key dates and details.

### **Section 2. How Affected**

7. My mother's diary records that my father went to the doctors on 24 March 1971 and was given cream and tablets. I do not know what symptoms prompted my father to go to the doctors but, given the issues he experienced later, I imagine he may have had swollen legs. My mother's diary shows that he had very little sleep and was admitted to George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton the following day, 25 March 1971. At the hospital, my father underwent tests which showed that he had a blood clot in his leg. He had an emergency operation that day.

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8. On 26 March 1971, the doctors operated on my father's leg again from 12:50pm to 3:30pm and he was given four pints of blood by transfusion. My mother was told that this was the 11<sup>th</sup> successful operation of its kind in the world. I was amazed. This was a major operation and George Eliot was not a hospital that was at the forefront of those things at the time.
9. My father was discharged on 10 April 1971. He was quite proud of the fact that he went back to work so soon on 3 June 1971. I remember him saying that the doctor shook his hand as though he had done so well to get over the operation.
10. Not long after the operation, there were signs of things not being quite right. On 20 June 1971, my mother recorded in her diary that my father had a rash and boils on his body. He had a blood test two days later and, on 26 June 1971, the doctors said he had a bug so they prescribed antibiotics. My mother records him being very lifeless, lying on the settee all day. Other symptoms included headaches and his legs were aching, none of these were taken seriously by his GP.
11. At the end of June 1971, my mother wrote that my father was exhausted, achy, and not eating well, He came home from work with kidney pains in early July. On 7 July 1971, he saw the nurse at work and had to lie down for some time afterwards. He was in pain overnight. On 8 July 1971, he saw the GP, stayed off work and again lay on the settee all day.
12. On 9 July 1971, the day before we went on a holiday to Blackpool, my father's skin and eyes were very yellow. However, we still went on the trip. His health must have worsened while we were away as, two days later, he had some blood tests at Blackpool Victoria Hospital. The test results revealed that he was jaundiced. He was transferred to an isolation ward at Devonshire Road Hospital in Blackpool and was told to rest.

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13. We had to stay in Blackpool for ten days. My father was discharged on 22 July 1971, on the understanding that he would go straight to George Eliot Hospital. He was admitted to the Amos Barton Ward of George Eliot Hospital on the same day.
14. On 27 July 1971, my father saw a specialist at the hospital. He was told to follow up with a specialist in six months' time and was discharged from the hospital on 2 August 1971. My mother's diary does not indicate that he was given any medication. Given the jaundice and other symptoms my father had been experiencing, I am quite surprised that he was sent away with no treatment and no follow-up appointments for a further six months.
15. After being discharged from hospital, my father was poorly for the next few months. He was weak, had trouble sleeping, was in pain, felt the cold and had very swollen ankles and legs.
16. On 23 October 1971, my father was again admitted to George Eliot Hospital and was prescribed tablets to drain fluid. Four pints of fluid were drained at this time. He had liver tests at the hospital on 28 October 1971.
17. On 4 November 1971, my father was transferred to the Nason Ward at Manor Hospital, Nuneaton where he underwent blood tests. My mother's diary shows that, on 12 November 1971, the tests confirmed inflammation of the liver. My father was advised to go on a high protein diet and not to drink alcohol. He was told that he must have been given a 'faulty pint of blood' when he had the transfusion in March 1971.
18. Although I am not sure of the exact date, I believe it would have been around this time that my father was diagnosed with serum hepatitis, now known as HBV. My mother's diary entries from 12 November 1971 state that they were told it could take months or years to clear, and I assume this was referring to the HBV infection.



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19. I think the doctors tried to downplay the situation by saying it was 'only a virus.' My father must have looked into it further at some stage, as I remember him telling me that he "must have got the blood from an American junkie."
20. I don't think my parents were aware of any of the risks associated with blood transfusions because it was a shock when my father started to experience all these symptoms. As far as I am aware, they weren't told by the doctors that there was a risk he could contract any infections.
21. After my father's diagnosis, I don't know if my parents were given adequate information to manage the HBV. He was told not to drink alcohol. However, he was certainly still experiencing a lot of symptoms that the doctors seemed unable to put right.
22. I am also not sure how much my parents were told regarding the risk of transmission to others. I remember them saying that they had to decide not have any more children. I don't think they were planning on having more children anyway; however, I imagine they made this decision due to my father's infection.
23. I am quite sure that my mother was not tested for HBV. I have never been tested either.

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

24. As far as I am aware, my father did not contract any other infections from the blood transfusion.

### **Section 4. Consent**

25. As far as I am aware, my father was not treated or tested without his knowledge or consent or for research purposes. From my mother's diary, it seems the doctors didn't test him for hepatitis until November

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1971 even though he had classic symptoms of liver failure well before then. There is nothing to suggest that they tested him sooner and did not tell him for some time.

### **Section 5. Impact**

26. My father was discharged from Manor Hospital on 13 November 1971, the day after he was told that he must have been given a 'faulty pint of blood'. His symptoms continued, however, and my mother records him being in pain and hardly able to walk. His veins were also inflamed and his legs and ankles were very swollen.
27. Although I feel there were clear signs my father was becoming very unwell, it seems nobody took any proper notice. Having looked through my mother's diary, it appears he was not prescribed any medication until 22 November 1971. This is the first time she records him being given "liver tablets".
28. On 29 November 1971, Doctor Smits at George Eliot Hospital confirmed that my father had cirrhosis of the liver. From the end of 1971 and into 1972, my father continued to suffer from fatigue and swollen legs. He also experienced difficulty focussing, a puffy face, and was unable to put on weight.
29. Then, in January 1972, my father was diagnosed with sugar diabetes. I don't know whether this was related to the HBV. However, I don't remember it being a major issue as it wasn't something that hampered his lifestyle. I do remember him buying the specialist diabetes range of foods at the time.
30. During the rest of 1972, my father's symptoms significantly worsened. My mother noted that he continued to suffer from swelling, cramping, kidney pains and pains in his leg. I still remember I would push my

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finger into his leg and the fingerprint would stay there because there was so much fluid.

31. On 4 April 1973, my father was again admitted into hospital where he had a liver biopsy. I am not sure which hospital he went to but I imagine it was the George Eliot.
32. At the end of 1973, the state of my father's legs continued to worsen and he was prescribed a steroid called Prednisolone. This is when things finally started to settle down. For several years, my father was stable and seemed to be reasonably healthy again.
33. I have kept a letter from Dr J Nuttall at George Eliot Hospital to my father's GP dated 29 April 1981. I produce a true copy of this letter as **Exhibit WITN0859002**. The letter states that my father's serum had been cleared of the HBV antigen. This is the only document I have that confirms my father once had HBV. The letter also notes that, given the HBV had cleared, there was no reason why my father could not receive normal dental treatment. I am not sure whether he had experienced any issues with dental care prior to this.
34. On 14 November 1981, my father had a thorough examination as an outpatient at the George Eliot hospital. The Consultant said that he was remarkably fit and he decided to take him off the Prednisolone, as he said there were side effects to being on steroids for over 10 years.
35. Nowadays, when a person comes off steroids, they reduce the dosage slowly over time. However, my father was taken off abruptly and was not monitored afterwards in any way. Nobody took note of how the steroids had helped him so significantly. Given how the steroids has made such an improvement to his health, it seems negligent that he was taken off it so abruptly.



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36. Four days after he was taken off the Prednisolone, my father started feeling aches. On 1 December 1981, my mother wrote in her diary that my father was thinner than ever, not sleeping well, had diarrhoea, was more irritable and had no energy. My father was never irritable with me and for him to be irritable was a definite change of personality. He was generally an upbeat person; however, on reflection I believe he was also depressed at points around this period. I feel that he may have read up on his condition and was aware that cancer of the liver was something that he could contract in the future.
37. On 5 January 1982, my father saw his GP, Dr **GRO-B** and mentioned his concern over his weight loss as he was very worried about this. Dr **GRO-B** thought he would be able to put the weight back on and tried to reassure him that he should be OK.
38. Later in January 1982, my father went for liver checks at Hinckley and District Hospital. The following month, he received a Neo-cytamen injection, a form of Vitamin B12, for possible anaemia because he had been so lifeless. He had pains all over his body but, despite all these symptoms, the doctors still did not suggest that he go back on the steroids.
39. In February 1982, my mother noted in her diary that my father had pains in his shoulder and neck. He had a hospital appointment on 21 April 1982 where again he asked how to put weight on and mentioned his lack of energy, cramps, diarrhoea, neck pain, stomach not feeling right, pains and indigestion but no further medication or treatment was given following this appointment. In April 1982, he couldn't remember the moves for his and my mother's sequence dancing. From May 1982, my mother records that my father had lots of pain in his side, shoulder, neck, back and stomach.
40. My father tried to carry on both at work and at home. He didn't make a fuss even though I believe he must have known that he was becoming seriously ill. He probably didn't want to worry my mother. They went on



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a holiday to Torquay on 14 June 1982 although my mother had to drive there and back and my father had to sit or lie down a lot to rest. It was a break but not a proper holiday.

41. My father continued to suffer from fatigue, swelling and pains all over his body. He was again admitted to George Eliot Hospital on 20 June 1982, by which time his stomach was very swollen.
42. On 23 June 1982, my father had a liver scan at Walsgrave Hospital in Coventry. This did not reveal any cancer but the doctors said he was short of Vitamin K. My mother's diary records that the doctors didn't seem to know what to do with him.
43. On 26 June 1982, my father was diagnosed with gallstones. He still had a very swollen stomach and legs. Despite this, the doctors continued to say that his illness was "nothing serious" and that he may not need a liver biopsy now.
44. However, just a few days later, on 30 June 1982, someone at the hospital mentioned a possible liver transplant, before ultimately deciding my father was too ill. It was too late by this stage and he would not have been able to withstand an operation.
45. [GRO-B] and I were engaged to be married in [GRO-B] 1982 and so we were in the process of planning the wedding. Around January 1982, things were relatively stable and we were not aware that my father was becoming so ill. However, in the weeks before the wedding, his health started to deteriorate rapidly.
46. My father was in a lot of pain. He was prescribed sleeping tablets and painkillers on 2 July 1982 but still had trouble sleeping. The GP prescribed antibiotics for his leg. On 5 July 1982, my mother wrote in her diary that he couldn't sleep, he was practically helpless and his right leg was stiff and hurting.

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47. On 7 July 1982, they finally agreed to put my father back on Prednisolone. However, by this time, we had realised it was too late for him. We considered postponing our wedding because my father was in and out of hospital. However, we are glad we didn't. If we had, he never would have been able to be a part of it.
48. In the early hours of the morning before the wedding, my mother and father were both awake and sitting in the kitchen. He had his head in his hands and said "I don't know how I'm going to get through the day tomorrow".
49. Our wedding day was **GRO-B** 1982. My father came to the church service and was able to give me away. However, he only just made it to the end of the aisle and remained seated during the wedding service. He had lost so much weight by this point. The clothes he had bought that spring for the wedding just hung on him. He and my mother had to leave as soon as the ceremony was over because he was so ill. They weren't able to come to the reception.
50. While **GRO-B** and I were away on our honeymoon, my mother called us and said we should come home early. In her diary, my mother described my father as a "zombie". He collapsed and was admitted into George Eliot hospital on 14 July 1982.
51. **GRO-B** and I came home early from our honeymoon and I am really glad we did. My father was very weak by this point and could hardly sit up in bed. Dr Sharman at George Eliot Hospital said there was possibly a small cancer on my father's liver. This was the first-time cancer was mentioned. The doctors said it had developed quickly and that my father's kidneys were also affected.
52. The doctors also tried to backtrack at one stage by saying it could be another virus causing my father to become ill. It felt as though they just didn't want to admit responsibility.

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53. My father died on **GRO-B** 1982. His death certificate confirms the cause of death to be Hepatic Failure, Cirrhosis of the liver and Chronic Active Hepatitis. I produce a true copy of my father's death certificate as **Exhibit WITN0859003**.
54. I think my father tried to be optimistic. He realised he could have died from the initial blood clot and so, from his perspective, at least he was able to live for another 10 years. However, he had put his trust in his doctors and I feel that he was let down by them time after time. In those days, you had no other choice but to trust the doctors.
55. My father's illness and subsequent death had a devastating impact on our family. Prior to his death, there were certain things we couldn't do as a family while my father was ill. Before his illness, my mother and father used to do sequence dancing together and my father would go to the local pub on Friday. However, while he was unwell, it was difficult for him to socialise and go out as he had previously.
56. Holidays also became increasingly difficult. However, my mother and father did manage to go on holiday to Torquay in June 1982. My mother drove given my father was unwell. She was frustrated that he was tired all the time and didn't want to do things, but I think she did not realise how unwell he really was. I believe he was putting on a brave face in an attempt to hide how ill he had become and he didn't want to make a fuss or worry her about anything.
57. While my father was ill, he did not have a lot of time off work. My mother kept his work diary from 1982, which shows he kept working right up until they went on the holiday to Torquay on 14 June 1982. I don't recall his illness affecting his work that much but I feel that was a reflection of his will, rather than his health. He could easily have taken more time off work but I think he wanted to try and get back to normal as soon as possible.



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58. I do not feel that we experienced any stigma associated with HBV. However, we did not talk about it to strangers because we were not that kind of family. I am sure my father told his brothers. It was terrible bad luck as to how he contracted HBV and so it was not something to be ashamed of. If someone had asked how he got it, he would have told them how it happened. At the time, I think there was more of a negative stigma associated with AIDS rather than HBV.

59. It was difficult for my mother and I to see my father so ill and there was a huge impact on the family after he died. His death was devastating for my mother. Unfortunately, she has suffered a lot with depression and is still on medication for this. She had cared for my father during his last few months and she was only 48 when he died. He was only nine months older. The year after my father's death was meant to be their silver wedding anniversary. They had wanted to go to Paris. I feel that her life effectively ended at the time that he died. Even now, she still feels it was unfair how long she has been living on her own.

60. After my father's death, [GRO-B] & I had to keep an eye on how my mother was doing. I had moved out of home just two weeks before he died. All of a sudden, my mother was alone. She had relied on my father a lot and so I think she found it very difficult being on her own. My father was the more optimistic one and took charge, so it was difficult for her when he was gone. She had to give up sequence dancing, which they had previously enjoyed together, as she no longer had a dance partner and she found it very upsetting to go to the dances on her own.

61. The financial impact on our family was not initially the primary concern as my father had been on a decent salary. There was, of course, a loss of earnings, but it is difficult to know exactly how much money my mother would have missed out on had my father lived until after his retirement. My mother was not working when my father died and one of

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our main concerns was keeping her occupied and busy. We tried to get her to join a few things but she was devastated at the time so it was very difficult.

62. My mother has been alone for almost 37 years. I don't think she has ever really moved on. She was made a widow so early and I think she still feels lonely and misses my father very much.

63. Now, my mother is 85 and has had Polymyalgia Rheumatica. She also suffers from depression and has the onset of Alzheimer's. Despite her Alzheimer's, she always tells doctors that she has been on her own for many years. It is still at the forefront of her mind. She needs full-time care and so is now living in a very expensive care home. In light of her health issues, I haven't wanted to involve her in the Inquiry by asking her to assist with my statement.

64. I have spoken to my daughters about their grandfather and have explained why he died so young. They and [GRO-B] have been very supportive.

65. My father had such a zest for life. I wish he were still here. He would have loved to meet his granddaughters and he would have been so proud that they both went to university. We can't help but think about all the things he missed out on. He was a big football fan, a season ticket holder for Leicester City Football Club, and he missed Leicester winning the league in 2015. Prior to his illness, my father had regularly given blood as a donor and was very proud of having received his 20 year certificate and badge from the Blood Donor's Association. The irony is that when he needed a blood transfusion, he was badly let down.

66. My daughters feel that I have bottled everything up a bit. I felt that I had to be strong for my mother, put on a brave face and pretend that everything was okay. However, I still have feelings of sadness about what happened. I feel it is unfair that my father had to go through so

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much. He was badly served and let down more than once. Maybe it would have been easier to accept his death if he had been older, but he was only 49. My mother is now 85 and this makes me think that my father could still be here with us today if he hadn't contracted HBV.

### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

67. Overall, I feel that the care provided to my father was inadequate. I can't help but feel that there were so many missed opportunities to intervene and treat his condition. My father receiving contaminated blood in March 1971 is the first thing in a catalogue of poor medical care, but even after this I feel he was failed so many times by the medical profession. They didn't seem to take notice of the symptoms until November 1971 even though there were classic signs of liver failure, neither were they prepared to refer him to a more specialised unit for him to have the right treatment. In particular, after he was abruptly taken off the steroids in October 1981, no-one seemed to be properly monitoring him. I feel that the doctors and consultants were negligent in all these instances.

68. It is also very disappointing that the doctors did not seriously consider the possibility of a liver transplant until June 1982, when it was far too late. This is even though cirrhosis of the liver had been confirmed in November 1971, over ten years earlier. A transplant really should have been suggested earlier, while my father was still on the Prednisolone steroids, as he probably would have been strong enough for the surgery at that point in time.

69. Although I feel there were clear signs my father's health was deteriorating, it seemed the doctors weren't really taking proper notice. He was continually told it was "not that serious" almost right until the very end. This was despite the fact he was experiencing symptoms such as a swollen stomach, pains in his legs and ankles, fatigue and



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diarrhoea. It was only a week before his death when the doctors admitted that there was no hope.

70. Perhaps my father's death would have been avoidable if he had received proper monitoring and treatment. I know hospitals are big and there are thousands of patients, but you expect to be treated well. It makes me concerned about the care I would receive if I had to go into hospital.

71. Other than his GP, my father was not seen by one person consistently. He saw numerous different doctors and specialists. The criticisms I have made are therefore not aimed at any particular individuals, but at the system as a whole.

72. My mother, father and I were never offered any counselling or psychological support. If the offer had come from a doctor, perhaps my mother would have accepted this.

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

73. My mother and father did not receive any kind of financial support. I know that my mother would have been unable to cope with the trauma involved in pursuing any compensation after my father's death. However, if I felt I could get some compensation for my mother, I would be prepared to fight for it. She was impacted the most by this and I do not feel it is right that she didn't receive anything.

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

74. I have never been involved in previous inquiries or campaigns. I hope that following this Inquiry, there can be some form of justice. This has all been brushed under the carpet until now. It would mean a lot to me if the Government and particularly the NHS finally admitted what they

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have done. I realise it is not going to make a difference for my father, but I think it does make you feel better about it.

75. I also think there should be some recognition of the impact this has had on our family, particularly my mother. In many ways, she is the one who has suffered the most. I feel that this should be acknowledged in some way.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ GRO-B \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 21/06/19