

Witness name: Sean Cavens

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Dated: 28th August 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

EXHIBIT WITN1146037



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'We need answers' - GRO-C dad infected in contaminated blood scandal speaks out

Sean Cavens, from GRO-C was just 18 months old when he was infected with hepatitis C during an operation on his leg

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By [Katie Dickinson](#)

18:00, 15 JUL 2017

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WHAT IS THE **CONTAMINATED BLOOD** SCANDAL?

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One of the youngest survivors of the contaminated blood scandal has called for a criminal investigation to be carried out into the tragedy.

Sean Cavens has spoken out for the first time after [the Prime Minister's](#) announcement of an inquiry into the scandal which claimed at least 2,400 lives.

Sean was just 18 months old when he was infected with hepatitis C during an operation to remove a lump on his leg.

Now 36-years-old and living [in](#) **GRO-C** he says the strain of the illness and treatment has cost him two marriages and left him unable to work for long periods of time.

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 **Sean Cavens of** **GRO-C** **who is one of the youngest surviving hemophiliacs of the contaminated blood scandal of the 1980's** (Image: Newcastle Chronicle)

And as survivors and relatives cautiously welcome the arrival a long-awaited public inquiry into the disaster, Sean is demanding answers into "why anyone would play Russian Roulette with my life".

He is calling for a criminal investigation, and claims the public inquiry will see details emerge of haemophiliacs "being used as guinea pigs, because we were cheaper than chimpanzees"

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"We want to see criminal charges, and we want to receive full compensation for the years of suffering this has caused."

Last week the government announced that there will be an inquiry into how patients with the blood-clotting disorder haemophilia were given blood donated by HIV and hepatitis C sufferers in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The scandal is believed to have contributed to the deaths of 2,400 people.

Sean was infected with hepatitis C at 18-months-old after going to hospital in Scotland for an operation on his leg.

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 **Sean Cavens of **GRO-C** who is one of the youngest surviving hemophiliacs of the contaminated blood scandal of the 1980's** (Image: Newcastle Chronicle)

Blood tests revealed that he suffered from haemophilia and, due to a loss of blood during surgery, was given donated blood.

He was not diagnosed with hepatitis C until 1997 after moving to the North East with his family.



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He said: "In 1997, I had effectively just started my adult life, my career choices would be limited to office based work, and I would have to declare my condition for every application I made.

"In the early 2000s I became increasingly tired, and just put this down to office based environments, however in 2004 it was apparent it was due to my hepatitis C.

"My world fell apart and I kept wondering how long I had left."

Sean started a treatment that had a low success rate but was the only option available.



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 **Sean Cavens of **GRO-C** who is one of the youngest surviving hemophiliacs of the contaminated blood scandal of the 1980's** (Image: Newcastle Chronicle)

But he said: "I only managed to remain on the treatment for 12 weeks. Flu-like symptoms meant I was unable to leave the bedroom, let alone the house.

"I had to leave my job with a blue chip company. It affected my mental state of mind, I could not take the pain from this treatment and was showing signs of depression.

"My marriage ended, as the strain of this became too much for us both."



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In 2016 Sean went to see a hepatitis C specialist [at the Freeman Hospital](#) after crippling symptoms forced him to take sickness leave from work again.

He was told he needed to start treatment immediately.

Sean said: "The good news is my treatment was successful and my hepatitis C is now undetected.

"Unfortunately it came at the cost of a further marriage. The strain, and my emotional state of mind, caused problems.

"I'm optimistic about the news of a public inquiry but I don't know if it will go far enough.

"We need closure - the mental scars will always be there but we need answers."

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