

Witness Name: Carmen Farrugia

Statement No: WITN1217001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CARMEN FARRUGIA

I, Carmen Farrugia, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Carmen Farrugia, DOB GRO-C 1978 and I live at GRO-C
GRO-C
2. My father, Victor Charles Farrugia, DOB GRO-C 1939, died in August 2002 at the age of 63 after being infected with HIV and Hepatitis through contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Affected

4. My Mum told me that my Dad became ill after receiving treatment for haemophilia in 1979/1980.
5. Mum and Dad separated when I was 5. They still got on and kept a great relationship. I often had Sunday dinner with my Mum, Dad and step-dad.
6. From what I can remember Dad did engineering jobs. My mum thought that he was being lazy because he wanted to sleep all the time and I think that is what broke their marriage down. Looking back, that was probably a symptom of his illness.
7. In 1986 Dad received a letter informing him that he had tested positive for HIV. I remember him taking my Mum into the kitchen to have a chat, and afterwards they came out and explained to me that he was sick and there were things that I was no longer able to do. They said I couldn't stay over on weekends anymore but he would come and see me during the day instead. I was told to be careful around Dad and that he was eventually going to go to heaven.
8. In 1986 people weren't sure how contagious HIV was. Dad told me I could no longer drink or eat from the same cup or plate, he said I couldn't kiss him on the lips and he wouldn't be able to go swimming with me anymore. AIDS was all over the TV and there was a lot of scaremongering going on; people were very ignorant.
9. We never spoke about the Hepatitis C but we knew that his liver was suffering. He was quite jaundiced.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. My father was told that he may have been exposed to vCJD.

11. I also received a letter telling me that I could have been exposed to it after receiving DDAVP as I am a haemophilia carrier.

Section 4. Consent.

12. I am not aware of what testing my father consented to.

Section 5. Impact

13. Dad was in the Navy when he was younger and he was quite fit, so becoming ill and not being able to be active anymore was very difficult for him.

14. My Dad was honest and open. He would tell neighbours and friends the truth that he had been infected through blood products, but this caused the news to spread through the community. People spray painted across his windows 'AIDS'.

15. I lost friends and I struggled at school. One boy at school who found out about the infection (because his mum knew mine and he overheard his parents talking) shouted out in front of all of my friends 'well at least my Dad doesn't have AIDS'. I was bullied throughout primary and secondary school, so I started to bunk off and I didn't even sit my GCSEs. I started smoking and drinking because I just wanted to fit in; I was just trying to blank out what was happening in my life.

16. Parents didn't want their children to associate with me. I had arranged to go away with my friend and her family when I was 12 for a caravan holiday, however they suddenly made an excuse why I could no longer go and my friend would no longer come out to play when I knocked for her.

17. Fortunately, after school I got an apprenticeship at a shipping company. I am now an administrator and earn less than £25,000 a year. If I had done my GCSEs I could be on much more. I have just had to do whatever I could to survive.
18. I had my son when I was 18 years old. When I first met my son's Dad I dreaded telling him what had happened to my Dad. When I built up the courage to tell him, I explained that Dad was infected through treatment for his haemophilia. This made him worry because, as a haemophilia carrier, I had also received treatment and I could see the fear on his face; I wasn't sure if he was scared of me or my Dad. My current partner is from California and the Americans seem to have a completely different attitude. When I told him what happened to my Dad he was appalled and extremely sympathetic and open to discuss it, whereas my ex-husband didn't want to talk about it at all.
19. When I was pregnant Dad couldn't help me the way he wanted to because he was ill. He was also concerned about holding my son as a baby because of the risk of infection.
20. My son always wanted to play with his Grandad. When Dad said no, my son told him that his other Grandad (my mum's partner) would play with him, and I could tell this really hurt Dad. It was tough not being able to do the things he wanted as a Grandad.
21. My son is now so successful. I pushed him to ensure that he succeeded in school and he is now an engineer. He doesn't care what people know or think. It must be because he is a different generation, but he is open to tell anyone what happened and is proud of his Grandad. He thinks that people should know exactly what the Government did, and how they continue to conceal the truth.
22. It hurts that I can't tell my Dad how proud he should be of his grandson.

23. Dad had problems with his bowel and bled quite heavily. When he would come round he would have to sit on something as the bleeding was so bad from behind. I would have to explain to my son that he couldn't touch the blood and having to explain why was difficult. Whenever this happened Dad would have to receive more treatment, treatment which might have been infected.
24. Dad used to take AZT which caused terrible diarrhoea; towards the end he couldn't even leave the house as it was so bad. It was like a living nightmare. He was always mentally and physically tired. He developed epilepsy which got really bad and had terrible psoriasis. I remember him being conscious about me touching him when he had very flaky skin as he was worried about the possibility of transmitting the virus.
25. I remember one day when I was 9 or 10 and Dad and I went out locally. He collapsed in the High Street and cut himself. People tried to help and I didn't know what to say. When the ambulance arrived I told them that he was HIV positive.
26. Dad couldn't care for himself at home so it was up to us as a family to look after him. We couldn't get him into a care home because he was such a high risk patient. At this time I had to care for my Dad, my son and work a part-time job. It was incredibly stressful and tiring. Dad suffered so much. He couldn't move properly, he had epileptic fits and he got bowel cancer; he went from a 6 foot 2 man who weighed 17 stone to a frail man who weighed 7 stone. Every time Dad went to hospital I would worry if he was ever going to come out.
27. The hospital reduced his medication because it wasn't working and they weren't able to put him on a new trial. He was like a living skeleton. I would go to the hospital every single day and I remember one day they told me they had stopped his medication. He only lived another 2 months after that.

28. Dad knew that he was going to die. I was taking my son to Blackpool for the weekend and he told me that he wasn't going to be there when we got back. He passed away the night we returned, and we didn't get the chance to see him.
29. As I was next of kin I had to arrange his funeral and clear his flat out. I also had to explain to my son that his Grandad had gone to heaven. Fortunately, the funeral directors were really good and Dad had prepaid for the funeral. I also received a lot of support from his family. However, unfortunately Dad's death ultimately tore the family apart and I didn't see them again for a long time afterwards because it was all so raw.
30. Dad died the year before I got married. He didn't get to walk me down the aisle and give me away which is what he had always wanted to do.
31. I am still apprehensive of telling people what happened to my Dad and I often just tell people that he died of cancer. Otherwise the first question I get is 'was your Dad gay?' – I then have to open up a whole can of worms and explain how he was murdered by the Government.
32. I am scared to this day of receiving treatment. They wanted to give me a transfusion recently and I ran out the hospital – there was no way I was accepting a transfusion. As a haemophilia carrier I dread receiving treatment because I am so scared and I don't think I will ever trust health professionals again. What happened to Dad could have easily happened to me if I had needed treatment earlier in my life.
33. It's a tragedy. It is not only the people who are infected but it's the people around them. This has affected my entire family and I have other family members who have been infected. My Nan passed away due to the stress of it all. My Dad has been gone for 18 years and, even now, I am still upset about it because I feel like I was robbed of my father.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

34. My father took me to counselling with him, but being 8 years old, I didn't really understand what was going on. I remember the lady asking if I was scared of my Dad, and I said that I wasn't; what scared me was that everyone else was scared of him and, by association, scared of me.
35. Being able to tell the counsellor how I felt in front of my Dad helped him as he could understand what was going on in my mind.
36. Dad did not receive any treatment for Hepatitis C.
37. I then had counselling in school because of what I was going through. I was initially very bright in primary school but when I went to secondary school it was a very difficult time for me. In particular, I didn't want to go to school when I had my period because other children would make comments about not using the toilet that I had been in because I had been bleeding. I told them that I didn't have HIV and it was Dad who had it but they just said that I was still in contact with it and it was contagious.
38. Overall I do not feel any counselling has helped as it does not change the facts.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

39. I don't know too much about the 1991 litigation but I know that Dad received a payment from it.
40. My dad was quite sick towards the end and [GRO-D] who had moved to [GRO-D] with his family came back to discuss Dad's Will. We all agreed that [GRO-D] nothing would go to us. However, some time after Dad's death I found out that [GRO-D] had changed the Will and everything had gone to him; as this was over 7 years

after Dad had passed away, I couldn't contest the Will. Dad has had pay-outs since his death but they have all gone to GRO-D I haven't seen a penny.

41. GRO-D had moved away, so he didn't have to see what I had to see. He didn't have to look after Dad and care for him when he was at his worst. He only heard about what was happening through telephone calls and when he did come over he normally came for money. I had my son when I was 18 and I have struggled my entire life raising him. I should be in a position where I am financially comfortable, but I am not.

Section 8. Other Issues

42. I want an apology. I want them to admit what they done to my father and all of the other haemophiliacs. I just want justice.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

43. I do not want to apply for anonymity.
44. I don't think I would be able to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed... GRO-C

Dated... 31-6-19