

Witness Name: L D Palmer  
Statement No:WITN1455001  
Exhibits:WITN1455002  
Dated: February 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LAUREN DENISE PALMER

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I, Lauren Denise Palmer will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Lauren Denise Palmer, DOB GRO-C 1983 and I live at GRO-C  
GRO-C
2. My father, Stephen Palmer, DOB 07.05.1958, died in on 11.08.1993 after being infected with HIV and Hepatitis C through contaminated blood products.
3. My mother, Barbara Palmer, DOB 24.02.1953, died on 19.08.1993 (eight days after my father) having been infected with HIV and Hepatitis C through my father. My mother had Burkitt like lymphoma at the time of her death.
4. Both my parents were treated under Dr Rizza at the Oxford Haemophilia Centre.
5. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late mother and father's full 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

6. I was very young when my parents were infected so I do not have much first-hand knowledge of their infections.
7. My father was a severe haemophiliac and received Factor VIII concentrate. I believe he first received this in 1979 and attach a copy of his treatment records at **WITN1455002**.
8. My father first had blood taken to check for HTLV 3 (subsequently known as HIV) on 03.04.1985 and tested positive on 13.05.1985.
9. My father tested positive for HBs Ab on 01.10.1979. He was diagnosed with acute Hepatitis B on 15.10.1992 and was admitted to the John Radcliffe Hospital the following month with jaundice and pancreatitis.
10. He was diagnosed as Hepatitis C positive on 26.10.1992.
11. It is clear from my father's medical records that after he tested HIV positive he did not initially act upon the advice he was given regarding contraception. His records state that he didn't think the risk of infecting my mother was worth wearing condoms for.
12. According to my mother's medical records she was diagnosed with Hepatitis C on 05.09.1991 and first tested HIV positive on 22.05.1991. Prior to this all her HIV tests since 1985 had been negative. She was tested every 6 months as recommended by the Haemophilia Centre.
13. When I was about nine years old my mother called a family meeting. She told us that she and Dad had a disease called HIV. I didn't know what this disease was, but I burst into tears as I knew that she would be going into hospital and wouldn't be getting better.

14. We were not told that they had Hepatitis C and I believe they were unaware of this infection.

15. I am not sure what other members of my family knew, although I know my Dad's parents and sisters were informed and it appears from my mother's records that her sister was also informed.

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

16. I am not aware of any other infections that my parents may have been exposed to.

### **Section 4. Consent**

17. I was tested for HIV and I believe GRO-D must have given permission to carry out this test.

18. There is reference in my mother's medical records to her blood being taken on 18.01.1991 and 17.12.1991 for the "Douglas Nixon research".

### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

19. I didn't have a particularly close bond with my father. I had to be very careful around him as he was a severe haemophiliac and I could have made him bleed. I was however very close to my Mum and my half brothers.

20. I often saw my father get violent and lash out towards my Mum and brothers. He had a very bad temper and in the end he went to live with his parents. I believe this was probably both because of his deteriorating health and because my mother wanted to keep us safe. Knowing now what he was going through, I think the way he was acting was definitely the effect of the HIV on his brain.

21. Looking through their medical records it appears that there were a number of difficulties in their marriage and that my father had a relationship at one stage with another woman and ran up a lot of debts which caused financial hardship.
22. Mum suffered from depression following Dad's diagnosis and was very depressed in the year before her death and following her own HIV diagnosis. It is clear from her medical records that following her HIV diagnosis in May 1991 she was encouraged to put her affairs in order and think about the future, including what would happen to both me and my half brothers.
23. Around the time that my mother told us about her infection, she was struggling with her health and putting on weight. She started drinking as a coping mechanism and that was getting out of hand. I think she felt like she didn't have the support of the rest of the family. In terms of actual symptoms, she covered them very well because she wanted to protect us.
24. According to my father's medical records he was started on PCP prophylaxis and AZT in September/October 1992. He suffered from a burning skin rash in 1989. He had bronchopneumonia in August 1992 and pancreatitis in October 1992. He was also diagnosed with paranoid psychosis in May 1992 which was followed by HIV encephalopathy that June.
25. My parents were both moved to the John Radcliffe Hospital towards the end. I didn't have any access to my Dad as there was a lot of conflict between my mother's family and his. My Mum was in a room on her own when I went to visit her, although I was never made to put on the 'space suits'. I remember being tested for HIV around this time. This was not a pleasant experience and apparently I screamed the hospital down.
26. My Dad died in August 1993 and Mum died just eight days after. I wasn't given the opportunity to go to my Mum's funeral as they thought I was too young. I know I was only young but it would have been nice to have been given the choice to go. I now don't have anywhere to go to visit her.

27. I was tested for HIV shortly after my parents' died.
28. My brothers were 13 and 17 years old when Mum died. They were sent to live with their father whilst I went to live with **GRO-D**. It was devastating being split up from my brothers so soon after I had lost my parents. I was only able to see them during the summer holidays after this and I would be grief-stricken every time I would leave; I just wanted us to be a family again.
29. When I went to live with **GRO-D** I was told that I couldn't say anything about HIV. I was the new girl at school when I moved so no one knew what had happened to me before. School was a distraction for me and I buried myself into my school work. I didn't want to be a burden on the family so I just wanted to work hard.
30. I believe the headmaster at the school I moved to was hesitant about allowing me into his school due to my link with HIV and **GRO-D** had to fight to get me in, but I was unaware of it at the time.
31. My home life was terrible. We weren't given the support to deal with it. **GRO-D** had a daughter around my age who had been used to being the only child and she didn't want me there. She just wouldn't speak to me. When **GRO-D** marriage broke down, **GRO-D** blamed me for everything and our relationship got even worse.
32. **GRO-D** found it really difficult to cope and **GRO-C** **GRO-C** she struggled to cope with the failure of her marriage. In a way she fuelled **GRO-D** hatred towards me. She needed support and there wasn't any there for her.
33. It was really difficult growing up because there was such a negative atmosphere in the house all of the time. I lived my bedroom, go down and eat dinner in silence and then go back to my room. I left the house whenever I could and spending time with friends was my only sense of normality.
34. **GRO-D**  
**GRO-D** |



was always made to feel like a burden to her and I personally feel she wasn't mentally or emotionally "fit" to look after me, as it was an extremely cold and unloving environment. These were the formative years of my life and it was horrible growing up in a household where I simply wasn't wanted.

35. I stayed with **GRO-D** until I was 17 and then I couldn't take it anymore. We had a really good family friend who lived in the same village as us. One day I snapped and ended up on their doorstep. I can't really remember what happened but I basically said I couldn't go home, and they took me in and said I didn't need to go back. Apparently they had been waiting for that day to happen for some time.

36. When I left home **GRO-D** didn't take it well. Her main concern with me leaving was how it would look to other people **GRO-D** not that she loved me or would miss me, and she therefore decided she wouldn't have anything to do with me from there on. Initially, I would send her birthday and Christmas cards but she would send them back unopened. From then on, I continued my life without her, and to be totally honest it was a weight off my shoulders and I was glad that her negativity was out of my life.

37. I stayed on at school and went to sixth form. I completed an art foundation degree but didn't really enjoy it and just floated through life for a little bit. I worked in retail jobs and moved in with my boyfriend at the time. When we broke up and I had a bit of a mid-life crisis and went to work on cruise ships for four years.

38. This is where I met my best friend. When I was around 29 years old I went to visit her in Bristol and haven't left since! I got a job as a make-up artist at Mac which I love and I finally feel settled.

39. Looking back on it now, my childhood were the hardest years of my life but I didn't really realise it at the time. I always had the mentality that things would get better, even though they never really did.

40. Before it all fell apart, we were a normal loving family. I therefore have always known what normal should be, and I therefore knew that life at **GRO-D** was far from normal.
41. Growing up I was very quiet, I kept myself to myself and didn't want to be any trouble. I was quite withdrawn and I wasn't living in a home where I felt comfortable to let out everything that I was holding in. I couldn't vent. I was just there and I was just surviving.
42. I have compartmentalised that part of my life and tried my best to get through it. I have friends that question how I am so normal, but I just think that things happen for a reason and it's how you deal with them that shape your life. Everyone goes through awful things so I just try to remember that people have it worse than me.
43. A few years ago my brother messaged me and told me there was a Panorama documentary on TV about contaminated blood products. After seeing Jason Evans I thought I should find him on Facebook to wish him luck. He told me that I could get involved with helping if I wanted to, and I have been campaigning ever since.
44. Initially it was all a bit crazy. The media were after me and I was doing interviews left, right and centre, presumably because I am one of the few people to speak publicly who has lost both parents.
45. When I first did interviews I had it in my head that we needed publicity and that it was for the greater good and that I had to do it; I didn't think it would be something that would affect me.
46. I have not had any negative stigma from it all, only positivity, however I am fully aware that would have probably been different had I told people twenty years ago.
47. I had always been told not to tell anybody and I had only ever told my closest school friend when I was growing up. It was therefore daunting speaking

publically about it, but I know my Mum would have wanted me to continue the fight.

48. My middle brother has only just started opening up to me and telling me about the things that he has been through. The devastation caused by this didn't stop at my parents' death; it continues to affect our family to this day. We have been pushed to the side lines of society and left to pick up the pieces.

### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

49. I had a social worker who would come to visit me for a few years. I don't think they really did anything or got through to me; when you are that young you don't really want to talk to a stranger. They just didn't really get anywhere with me so they eventually stopped.

50. There was no real support given to **GRO-D** which had a knock-on effect on her daughter, and there was no care available for my Grandad who lost his daughter.

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

51. I believe that my parents may have been part of the 1991 Litigation and were made to sign a waiver.

52. I remember the MacFarlane Trust gave us some financial help when **GRO-D** was struggling financially and she had no income. We were living on the breadline and I think they gave us a few one-off grant payments to help with school uniforms and similar things. However, I had to go without a lot of things. We couldn't go on holidays or school trips - we missed out on so much.

53. There was nothing put in place for continuing financial support and as such I have never even been able to even consider getting on the property ladder. It



is things such as buying a house that have never been obtainable for me having grown up with no family to give me financial support.

54. Since becoming involved with Factor 8 I have been made aware of other payments that I may have been eligible for. About a year ago I applied to Skipton for the Stage One and Two payments for my parents. This was a lengthy and difficult process, and I was continuously made to prove things to the Inquiry. After a year, I have just received the Stage One payments for both of my parents and the Stage Two payment for my Mum.

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

55. I need the full truth to come out as I believe that things were covered up. I believe the haemophilia community were mistreated and tested upon and we need to know why. It has destroyed a generation and the effects are still being felt.

56. My parents don't have their real cause of death on their death certificates. HIV/AIDS is not mentioned.

57. I feel like children of the infected are being neglected. There is no real support available for us and we are often overlooked by the financial support schemes.

### **Anonymity**

58. I do not wish to remain anonymous.

59. I want 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 28/02/19.