

Witness Name: Mrs Androulla Andreou
Statement No.: WITN1821001
Exhibits: 0
Dated: 14 February 2019

**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MRS ANDROULLA ANDREOU
INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

Section 1: Introduction

1. My name is Androulla Andreou. My address and date of birth details are known to the Inquiry.
2. I am the widow of the late Mario Andreou, who was born on GRO-C 1965 and who passed away from metastatic liver cancer on 29 April 2017 at the age of 52.
3. I have two daughters; the eldest, recently married and moved away from home and the youngest lives with me at home. My youngest daughter is also Mario's daughter. My daughter and I work full-time.
4. Mario and I got together in 1993. A short while into our relationship, he told me he had something to tell me; that something was that he had hepatitis which he got from a blood transfusion. He asked if I still wanted to be with him!! I told him that of course I did. I loved him very much and Mario loved me. We wanted to spend the rest of our lives together. We wanted to grow old together.

5. Mario and I married a short time later, on the 14 October 1994. I remember the early days of our relationship. He was a very happy-go-lucky person with a wonderful sense of humour; he was always cracking jokes. He was a very a clever, hardworking (holding down three jobs at various points throughout his life) and a very sociable man.
6. I was widowed at the age of 49 years old. Our daughter was 20 years old when she lost her dad.
7. I have recently become a grandmother which is just what I needed at this time. My granddaughter has brought me so much joy; she has helped towards my healing following the loss of my husband.
8. I am making this statement in Mario's memory.

Section 2: How Affected

9. Mario was born with beta thalassemia major; a blood condition which required him to have regular blood transfusions to survive. From his birth, he was given three units of blood every three to four weeks depending on his haemoglobin levels. For every year of his life he received between 40 and 50 units of blood. The treatment started off at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children and under the care of Dr Thomas. In 1977 when Mario was 17, he moved home and as a result his treatment transferred to the North Middlesex Hospital (NMSH) in Edmonton N18 where he was placed under the care of Dr Anne Yardumian. Despite his thalassemia Mario led a one hundred percent normal life. He went to college and pursued a career within the head offices of Warner Brothers as an assistant accountant.
10. In around 1990, Mario's thalassemia consultant stated in a letter; which is in his medical records, that she was worried by his significantly deranged liver function and as he was hepatitis B (HCB) surface antigen negative and surface

antibody positive (vaccinated) and anti-hepatitis B core antibody positive, he should be sent for hepatitis C testing. On 25 September 1990 he was sent for hepatitis C (HCV) serology.

11. In February 1991 Mario was told that he had been infected with contaminated blood and had contracted the hepatitis C virus.
12. I can assure you Mario was never given any information or advice about there being a risk of being exposed to an infection by receiving blood; he had no clue that he could be infected by the contaminated blood. This was so even though he had many transfusions throughout his life. The knowledge of the fact he had become infected with hepatitis C came as a massive shock to him.
13. Mario was infected with hepatitis C (HCV) and hepatitis B (HBV); we were quite shocked to hear about the HBV because Mario (and I) did not find out about the HBV infection until he was operated on in 2016. I have looked through his medical records which are quite confusing. The records indicate that In April 1991, Mario received a hepatitis B vaccination. I find this confusing because it indicated previously in 1990 that he had tested positive for hepatitis B surface and core antibodies. On 13 May 1991, the records state that Mario had the following tests and results: "HBsAg negative, Anti-HBc positive, Anti-HBs positive". I believe now that the HBsAg negative result means Mario was not infected with hepatitis B, but that the anti-HBc positive result indicates previous or ongoing infection with hepatitis B. I understand that the anti-HBs positive result indicates that Mario was immune and protected against the hepatitis B virus and so could not be infected.
14. To my knowledge Mario was advised he had been infected with the hepatitis C virus by two people. First by his consultant Dr Anne Yardumian at the NMSH and second by Dr Wonke at the Whittington Hospital.
15. Mario understood very little about the hepatitis C virus. I am not sure how much was explained to him but it cannot have been much because his

understanding of it was so limited. I was clueless and so was he to be honest. We had no computers at that time to do our own research; we relied upon the appointments and check-ups to keep us updated on his condition.

16. I am unable to say exactly how much information was given to Mario as we were not together yet, but I can see from his medical notes that he was told that he carried the HCV infection and that he would require treatment to cure it. I do not think that Mario was given adequate information to help him to understand and manage the infection; from my conversations with him, he just spoke about his aim and the hospital's aim which was to cure him of the HCV. I do not think that he was advised of the serious nature of the infection and that it could have such serious impact on the quality and length of his life. He never mentioned it to me. Mario just followed all the instructions on how to cure the HCV as he wanted to be better and to get on with his life.
17. This is hard to answer as I am unaware of when this information became known to the health authority. I assume that Mario was told at the time when they had his results and knew they needed to inform him, but, I do not know.
18. From my knowledge Mario was advised about the infection in person by Dr Anne Yardumian. I am not sure how this information was relayed to him but I do know that there could not have been a better, more caring, sympathetic professional to have told him.
19. Mario and I were given no information about the risk of infection to others. I remember that just before our wedding I attended an appointment at the Whittington Hospital with Mario to see Dr Wonke. Mario was attending the Whittington for treatment. Dr Wonke went through Mario's test results as normal. She then asked about us and our relationship and I explained a little about myself and that we were soon to be married. I explained that I had a three year old daughter from a previous relationship and Dr Wonke said "Oh well you have a child, there is no need to have any more". I did not know what she meant at the time. I did not question the comment as I was quite taken

aback by it. Mario and I knew we wanted children. Why would she say that? It did upset me but due to my lack of knowledge and naivety I did not question it. We received no explanation as to why she said this and were given no information about risks of others being infected. Did Mario and I use protection? No. The only protection was birth control through the pill or coil. We were not advised that this virus may be contagious in any way by anybody. Luckily I was not infected.

Section 3: Other infections

20. Mario was infected with hepatitis B and hepatitis C.

Section 4: Consent

21. Yes, I believe that Mario was treated and tested without his knowledge, consent and without being given adequate or full information. Mario did not know the risk of receiving a blood transfusion despite the very many he had throughout his life. When he was told that he was infected with HCV and then later that he had been infected previously with HCB, he very shocked. He must have been tested and treated for the Hepatitis B without knowing about it. When I asked him some years later about what he was told, he just said that he had an infection and it was going to be cleared. I also cannot understand why he was constantly on the HCV treatment and yet he never cleared the virus.
22. I feel sure of the fact that Mario was treated and tested without his knowledge because Mario's GRO-C also has beta thalassemia major and she has not ever had to deal with any of these problems. She has been told that she has not been infected; however, she was not ever advised that she would be tested to establish whether she had it. I appreciate her records might show something different but she was not ever made aware of the need for the testing for it.

Section 5: Impact

23. The impact of the infected blood on Mario and me and on our family has been and still is huge; ultimately it cost Mario his life, me my husband and my daughter her father, all too soon.
24. The mental and physical effects of being infected were numerous:
25. The mental impact of the hepatitis C was the main thing that Mario struggled to deal with. Mario was very troubled by finding out that he had become infected with hepatitis C and it led to him becoming very depressed, withdrawing from life and isolating himself from his family. Mario was already disheartened about the fact that he had beta thalassemia major; there was a big stigma attached to having it and a lot of ignorance around it, especially from his own cultural background. He could not bear the thought of having to tell people that on top of the blood disorder, he had become infected with HCV. Mario developed severe depression in the end; his records show that he was being prescribed paroxetine for it from around 1995, which is four years following his hepatitis C diagnosis. I believe he started to become depressed when he began to realise the seriousness of the hepatitis C and that it intensified when he started and continued on the treatment for it. He was on the anti-depressants from the point that he began to experience symptoms from the interferon treatment and he remained on them until his death. He became suicidal. At times he was very emotional and scared.
26. Physically he developed: osteopenia; osteoarthritis; osteoporosis; hypothyroidism; cirrhosis of the liver leading to cancer of the liver and liver failure; dyspepsia; collapsed vertebrae; chronic back pain; aches and pains especially in ankle joints; low libido; hypothyroidism; hypogonadotropic hypogonadism and incontinence. Depression was his main and overriding problem.
27. Mario underwent a right hepatectomy in June 2016.

28. Mario started alpha-interferon on 9 May 1991. It is my recollection that this was initially for a period of six months. He received 3mU every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. His treatment actually continued until 2003, when we were told that the virus had been cleared. I recollect that he was treated every six months for a six month period to see if he could clear the virus and in all he was on the treatment for about 12 years. It was a very harsh treatment to be on and Mario suffered a great deal because of it. Over the years Mario's treatment changed, he moved onto peg-interferon with ribavirin in around January 2001 and his paroxetine antidepressants were increased to 30mg because his depression was getting worse. He was also treated with calciferol; co-dydramol; paracetamol; thyroxine and the frequency of his blood transfusions increased.
29. It is my belief that Mario was always given any necessary treatment; I do not believe that he suffered any obstacles or difficulties in accessing the treatment.
30. I am aware that there was a form of treatment for the HCV which had fewer side effects; however, I understand Mario was not given this option due to budget constraints.
31. As previously mentioned Mario suffered severe depression and I think that the treatment made him considerably worse. He would lock himself away, become quite violent and would isolate himself so much that I was not able to get through to him. He pushed me away, although he knew I would always be there for him. He was in constant pain; the treatment was horrendous. He suffered from fever, shivers, sweats, aching bones and muscles. He was also very lethargic, he lost his appetite, he vomited every single day, he cried constantly and did not communicate much. He was very angry with everyone and life itself. I recall that his behaviour became violent; he would have extreme and sudden violent outbursts, he used to smash up our home through extreme anger. This behaviour was totally out of character for him. I also remember that he used to do something quite strange; he used to press on his forehead

all of the time. I used to wonder if he could hear something that he was not able to say out loud. He was keen to carry on as normally as he could and would try to pop out to the local nursery; he tried to do some gardening but he got to the point where he could not tolerate going out anymore, where he just wanted to be alone. He slept most of the time, in fact the treatment sent him into a coma-like state. At times, I felt like I could not do anything to help, but I persevered. My husband was going through this. Sometimes, I would email his consultant to advise her of his depression and behaviour and hope that this would help. How did he manage it? I take my hat off to him, it was not easy and he had a very rough time. I nursed him through most of it; as well as trying to raise our little family, while working full-time and running our home. Mario suffered with HCV until the end of his life, the treatment was unsuccessful. They said that he cleared the virus in 2003 but I don't see that he did because he died from liver failure. He had severe cirrhosis of the liver and all the non-reversible illnesses that he developed. He was a very troubled man and felt very let down. He just wanted a normal life and always had big dreams.

32. I am not aware of, but I just do not know whether his infected status impacted upon his treatment, medical and/or dental care or any other conditions.
33. The impact of this on Mario's private, family and social life has been and still is immeasurable.
34. We were no longer like a married couple; we were like two best friends living together. Of course we loved each other dearly but the intimate side to our relationship was affected from around 2000. This bothered Mario and I greatly, but, we never mentioned it each other and I certainly did not mention it to Mario because it would have served to make him feel worse than he already did. Mario eventually became incontinent and would sleep on the sofa, he would say it was because he was watching a film but he would stay there all night. This went on for years (and he hid it well from me) in fact since from around the start of the combination drugs of peg-interferon and ribavirin in 2003. Looking back he became like a 90 year old man with a young person's face.

35. Mario stopped attending some family events with me; he got the point where for most of the time, he did not want to go anywhere, not just because he was depressed, lacked confidence or had low self-esteem but because of the constant pain he was in. He also could not be bothered to keep explaining to people what he was feeling and why.
36. Mario also became very unsociable and quite aggressive towards me and his daughter, although it was not all the time. He would then feel bad and cry and we would sit together and cry and I would explain that I understood it was not him.
37. In terms of the stigma, Mario was embarrassed of his condition and did not want to or me to discuss it with anyone.
38. There were work related and financial effects too:
39. Work-related effects: Mario was medically retired from his much loved job in 2001; he was unable to function any longer because of the treatment for and the depression caused by the HCV. At first, being signed off work was a relief for him as physically he had been unable to cope. However, in the long run this contributed to his low self-esteem and his depression and he lost any remaining self confidence that had as he derived a lot of interest and social interactive from work. Retiring served to isolate him even further and I know he became very lonely. You see he would have been stuck at home all day by himself.
40. Financial effects:
41. Mario and I were married in 1994, three years following his diagnosis. We wanted to get a mortgage together in order to start our family. With this we attempted to get life insurance for security. I was able to take out life insurance myself however Mario was always denied that possibility because of his

infected status and when he passed away this obviously left me in a very, very difficult situation.

42. Mario retiring had a significant financial impact on our family; but, we had to carry on we had to get by financially as best as we could. Mario had credit cards and used them to the maximum. We did encounter financial difficulties for quite a few years. I worked full-time and was the main bread winner which meant I was unable to care for Mario. We applied for certain grants; for example a home adaptations grant through the council but my applications were always declined as I worked full-time. We were not aware of the Skipton and Caxton funds at this point. I had to ensure my mortgage and bills were paid. I had to ensure that there was food on the table. I worked hard for us. I did my best but we accumulated a lot of debt on credit cards which escalated and the only way out was re-mortgaging our home and adding this debt onto the mortgage. I did everything in my power to never miss a payment on anything.
43. As Mario's condition deteriorated and we realised that he was going to die, we took the decision that I would care for him at home. My work was unable to support me financially through this but agreed to allow me the time off unpaid. I expected; as a result of the diagnosis that he was given, that this would last for a period of six month but actually Mario passed away within one week. I then had a period of six weeks before returning to work, which I had to do because I had not financial support. I only managed through the seven by receiving gifts of kindness from my friends and family.
44. There was a huge impact on me, the children, parents and other family members:
45. There were times when I thought I would never cope. I called the Samaritans a couple of times as I needed advice and did not know where to turn. That did not help. I think they did not know what to say. They had no answers for me. I would come off the phone and be none the wiser myself. I was not referred. I

was just left. It all felt very superficial. I was also depressed; however, I carried on for my children and for Mario. Mario was very angry with everyone and everything. On a couple of occasions, our relationship nearly ended as he was verbally abusive to me; he would say some horrendous things to me, but then he would regret saying them. My love for Mario was very deep, in fact our relationship started as a little love story and I believe that this made our relationship very strong. However, there were times when I thought I would end up having a nervous breakdown because of what was going on. This however did not stop me from caring for my husband. I felt so isolated sometimes as I did not want to make a big deal of things, but it did get to me too. I worked full time, I brought up my children, ran the family home, took care of everything, finances etc. Mario was in no frame of mind, and was not physically able to. I was the main bread winner. I never complained about Mario as I did not want people to think badly of him. He was my husband and I loved him. A lot of his behaviour was due to the medication and I knew that.

46. Our family has suffered very much because of Mario being infected with HCV. Our children, have grown up with all the above which has had an effect on them too. We have seen and experienced things no family should ever go through. Our daughter was very reluctant to go to school; she cried every day. She told her teacher her dad was disabled and she needed to look after him. She was only six or seven years old at the time, maybe even younger. This was because she saw the side-effects of his treatment and believe me it was not very nice. I am not sure if putting this in writing does what we went through justice. I do not even know if it seems as though we went through a lot, but we did and the news, when it came, that Mario had cancer of the liver hit us very, very hard. Now I live without Mario, I run a home without him and have to be mum and dad to our children. Mario would have been a grandfather now and he does not even know about it. I feel very depressed; the feeling I get every morning when I wake up is awful. I talk myself into getting on with my day, every single day. I suffer severe flashbacks of everything, the years of treatment, his operation in 2016 and the news that he only had six months to live in 2017 followed by his death only three weeks later.

47. Mario was very embarrassed about his condition; at first he didn't like members of family and friends to know about the hepatitis C. I would tell him it was nothing to be ashamed of. It was not his fault, but he always thought he would be judged or people may not want to be near him.

48. Mario was one of three children. [GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

[GRO-C] When they found out that Mario had beta thalassaemia major [GRO-C] they were devastated. [GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

It was not easy for them. Then when Mario contracted HCV they were even more devastated. Mario kept the diagnosis from them at first, I am not too sure why to be honest, he probably wanted to protect them.

49. Mario's siblings were aware too. Everyone was very upset but again no one was actually aware of the long term effects and complications this would lead to.

Section 6: Treatment/ Care/ Support

50. I am not aware of Mario facing difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care and support in consequence of being infected.

51. Mario was offered counselling via his haematology consultant due to his severe depression and because he admitted he felt suicidal. I was never offered support or counselling. As Mario's wife and a person affected by all of this, I did not get the opportunity to attend any support group. I received nothing; no support at all, not from my GP and not from any associated society.

Section 7: Financial Assistance

52. Mario did receive financial assistance as a result of what happened.

53. I am not sure how and when Mario found out about the financial assistance that was available to him. He obviously knew by 2004 because that was the point at which he received the first payment from Skipton.
54. Mario received the first ex-gratia payment of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund in around 2004. When he developed cirrhosis of the liver and then advanced liver disease he was eligible for a second stage payment of £50,000. I was not aware that he received the £50,000 so I am not sure if or when it was paid. Mario also received £14,574 per year, which were paid on a monthly or quarterly basis but I am unsure when these payments started. When Mario died, I received a £10,000 lump sum from the Skipton Fund. Mario's annual payments, which had been paid to him in monthly instalments, were paid to me for two months following his death, I received the payments for May and June 2017 as a lump sum. The payments from Skipton stopped in June 2017. The Caxton Foundation paid £3,500 towards Mario's funeral costs. I now receive £519 a year towards winter fuel bills, this comes from England Infected Blood Support Service and that is it. I have not applied for any further financial assistance as I believe this is means tested. I work full-time and think that therefore I am not eligible. When Mario passed away everything stopped; the incapacity benefit; the mobility benefit; the Skipton payments. All of these payments had helped to contribute to the family home. I went back to work six weeks after he passed away as I had the mortgage and bills to pay. I have been left with trying to make ends meet ever since as now there is only one salary coming in. Mario did not have life assurance. He did have a pension which is now paid to me but I only get half of what he used to get per month.
55. As Mario applied for the Skipton Fund, I am not sure what process he had to go through in order to get access to the funds.
56. Again, I am unsure whether Mario faced any obstacles or difficulties in obtaining financial assistance.

57. I do not know whether any preconditions were imposed on Mario when he received the financial assistance.
58. I think it is unfair that I have received no support from EIBSS or any other fund. When my husband was alive we bore the responsibility for paying for things together. We had a home, we had a family together. The financial assistance he received assisted him with the contributions that he had the responsibility for. Now he is gone, that responsibility has not disappeared, it is still there but I get no support for it, despite the fact that he is not here any more because of the infected blood he was given. I am having to cope with paying everything myself. AT the very least I believe that the annual payments of £14,574 per year should have been transferred to me.

Section 8: Other Issues

59. I have copies of Mario's medical records from the North Middlesex Hospital from 1990 to 2003. I have made requests for other records; including from Primary Care Support England but these have not been received. I would like the opportunity to make a supplementary statement to the Inquiry should it be necessary following receipt of any further medical records.
60. I would like the Inquiry to answer the questions we have been asking for years. These include:
61. Who decided to go ahead and give this blood?
62. Where exactly did it come from?
63. Why was the blood not screened?
64. Why were these patients not aware of the risk of an infection in receiving the blood at any point in time but especially in later years?

65. Why was the information that was provided about hepatitis C so vague?
66. Why has the government kept this scandal so quiet for so long, particularly when compared to other countries and their responses?
67. What makes it different now, what has changed to bring about the Inquiry now?
68. What justice will all these people who were infected and affected get?
69. Who will be accountable for this?
70. Why were some patients offered the more expensive advanced treatment while Mario was only even given the cheaper option which meant enduring the suffering for longer, and unsuccessful outcome and an unnecessary death?
71. Mario was a hard working young man; he contributed to the family home, we made decisions together for our family. When we decided to purchase our family home we did not know about the significance of his infected status. He thought he was going to be treated and that it would be successful. We made decision on this basis. Now Mario is not around to assist me in the paying of our family bills. This is not my fault and nor was it his. Why was Skipton and Caxton stopped when he passed away? His financial liability for the bills did not stop when he passed away in fact they continued and transferred to me and yet I have had no support other than the £10,000 bereavement allowance and the £500 winter fuel allowance to help. Six weeks after his death I had to go back to work. This was far too soon. I did not have a chance to grieve. Since his death I have been feeling very depressed. I miss him so much and I wake up every day feeling a huge burden because I have to face the day. I go to work because I feel as though I have no choice. I need the money I earn to survive. If I had received some annual financial assistance from Skipton or EIBSS I could have taken some time off for compassionate leave or I could have changed my hours to part-time. I find that there are times when I feel that

I cannot face things and I need time to myself. Other than the 20 days annual leave I am not entitled to any other time off.

72. Who was responsible for continuing to accept and supply this blood to patients through our NHS despite knowing the risks attached to doing so and knowing that there would be deaths that resulted?

Statement of Truth

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

Signed:

GRO-C

Full Name: ANDROULLA ANDREOU

Date: 14th february 2019