

Witness Name: Carole Keenan

Statement No.: WITN1917001

Exhibits: WITN1917002

Dated: 19 November 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CAROLE KEENAN

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Carole Keenan. My date of birth is GRO-C 1964 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I live in Ireland with my husband and my son.

Section 2. How Affected

2. I am writing this statement in memory of my late mother, Joan Wearing, date of birth GRO-C 1942, who contracted hepatitis from a blood transfusion and passed away on GRO-C 1975.
3. My mother had a blood or skin condition which resulted in her needing regular blood transfusions for a period of time when I was about 5 or 6 years old. I do not remember what condition this was as I very young .

There is no one else alive who knows what my mother's condition was or why she needed transfusions.

4. I remember that she used to have to go to Westmorland Hospital in Kendal to have transfusions, and this lasted for a short while. I believe that it was an illness she had, not a lifelong condition as it only lasted for several weeks or months and then she didn't have any more transfusions.
5. I do not know if my mother was ever told about the risks involved in having blood transfusions.
6. My mother was later diagnosed with Hepatitis B (HBV). I am not sure when this diagnosis occurred; I was too young to be aware of it at the time.
7. After the transfusions, my mother never seemed to recover, and when I was 11 years old she went into hospital again because she had organ failure. She was in the hospital for a long time – months maybe – and I went into hospital every few days to visit her.
8. My mother died in hospital on GRO-C 1975. The cause of death on my mother's death certificate says a) hepatic failure and b) chronic active hepatitis, although I did not know this at the time **WITN1917002**.
9. A few years afterward, when I was in my teens, I asked my dad exactly what she had been sick with and died of. I was being bullied at school by other children who seemed to know something bad about my mum and how she had died that I didn't know, so I wanted to know exactly what had happened. My dad never used to talk about it up until that point, but when I asked he told me that it was HBV. He said that after she had the blood transfusions when I was 5 or 6, she developed HBV and got very sick. He said that she had been sick before then, but it had gotten much worse after the transfusions and led to her death.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. My mother was infected with HBV only.

Section 4. Consent

11. I do not believe that my mother was tested or treated without her consent but I cannot be sure.

Section 5. Impact

12. All of my memories of my mother from age 5 onward are her being really sickly and tired. She seemed to be ill all the time until she went into hospital to die.
13. I believe she went into hospital about 4 to 5 months before she died and we visited her every few days. I remember that she used to cry a lot when we went to visit. I think she knew she was dying and that she was going to leave three small children behind.
14. My mother never received any treatment for her HBV. I do not think any treatment was available at that time.
15. I do not know if having HBV impacted on her receiving care for other conditions.
16. My mother's illness devastated her family life. There was no family life after that. She had to give up work, and even before she went to hospital she couldn't get out of bed. She was just sick all the time. Before she had the transfusions she lived a proper full life. Whatever was wrong with her before never impacted on her life and prevented her from living fully, it was just something she got treatment for. Afterward she had to stop everything she was doing because she was so ill.

17. When she was sick at home, this didn't have as much of an impact on me because we just thought she was going to get better. It did mean, however, that I was the only female in the house and as my dad was a real male chauvinist, I had to learn how to do all of the domestic tasks like cooking and cleaning.
18. Once she went into hospital I think we started to realise that she wasn't going to come home. We could see how sick she was.
19. When I was a teen, people at my school found out that my mum had died of hepatitis and began to assume terrible things about our family. It was always assumed that she had AIDS. Everyone had heard about AIDS, but didn't know what it was exactly. They assumed she must have been a whore. I never told anyone at school about it but some of their parents were friends with my parents, and would have known about it from them.
20. I knew that kids were saying bad things and I didn't understand why they would think bad things about my mum – that's what prompted me to ask my dad what had happened.
21. When she died, it devastated us as a family. My dad shut down – he would never speak about Mum. He was heartbroken. He never remarried. GRO-C When I was talking to him about what she died of, he said she was the love of his life and there would never be anybody else.
22. My dad had his own business as a central heating and plumbing engineer, but after Mum died the business went under because he couldn't cope anymore. We became a very low income family because dad was on the dole, and we basically looked after ourselves as kids. Before this, when he had had his business, we were treated as middle class, and then during Mum's illness and immediately after her death people saw my dad as the hero because he was bringing up three children on his own. But later on, people began to look down on us. My dad did the best he could, but it just wasn't good. We didn't have a good

upbringing because of it. We couldn't do any of the things we had done before, and we were lucky to eat sometimes. People judged him for it, and judged us as well.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

23. I do not know if my mum had any trouble accessing treatment or support in relation to her HBV.
24. I have never been offered any counselling in relation to my mum's HBV or her death. None of us have, and I think we all could have done with it.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. We were not able to apply for any financial assistance as a result of my mum's HBV. I believe my dad may have had a widower's pension.

Section 8. Other Issues

26. I have tried to get copies of my mum's medical records but have not been able to obtain any. I got in touch with a GP in the area where we lived, but they had no record of her. The hospital where she was treated has closed down now, and my solicitors requested records from the Trust that operates the new hospital which has replaced it, but they hold no records pertaining to my mum.
27. I would like to know why the contaminated blood scandal happened. I know that we are just one story of thousands, but I would just like to know how these things are allowed to happen and why nobody has been held responsible and it has taken so long for it all to come out.
28. I would be interested in receiving an apology from the government and compensation for what happened, but I think I want answers more than anything.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

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Dated 19 November 2020.....