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Witness Name: Thomas Griffiths
Statement No.: W2148
Exhibits:
Dated: 18th January, 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

First WRITTEN STATEMENT OF Thomas Griffiths

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th November, 2018.

I, Thomas Griffiths, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Thomas David Griffiths. My date of birth is GRO-C 1944 and my address is known to the enquiry. I am a retired hotelier.

2. In this statement, I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C. In particular, how I was infected, how the hepatitis C virus affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on me and my family.

Section 2. How Affected

3. In 1951 when I was seven years of age I had to have some teeth extractions at my local dentist in Shrewsbury. My gums continued to bleed for days after. Eventually I was taken into Birmingham general hospital where it was discovered I had haemophilia.

4. In 1971, I moved to Dumfries and attended the haematology centre at Dumfries infirmary on a regular basis for routine appointments. I was a young, fit man who enjoyed playing sports. I would often get knocks and bumps during my sporting activities. This often caused excessive bleeding in my joints. Between 1979 and 1983, every time this occurred, I would attend the haematology centre at Dumfries and receive factor VIII blood products to help with the clotting process to stop the bleeding in my joints. Between these years I might have had this procedure between 5 to 10 times a year. I have no doubt in my mind that it is during these years that the factor VIII blood products that were given to me were contaminated and it is during this period I became infected with hepatitis C.

5. I am a member of the haemophilia Society. In the early 1990s it became public knowledge that imported blood products given to haemophiliacs were infected. There was much discussion among fellow haemophiliacs regarding this and I became aware that a number of haemophiliacs had been infected with hepatitis C and HIV. On a routine appointment, I brought this subject up with my consultant. His name was Dr Francis Toolis. Dr Toolis said that Scotland had never used imported blood products. I challenged this as I distinctly remember when I was receiving factor VIII blood products looking at the labels. I remember that on many occasions it stated that the manufacturers were from Perth, Australia. I also remember that the name Baxter was on some of the labels. I believe this to be an American manufacturer. I said this to Dr Toolis but I was dismissed. He

was adamant that no one from Scotland had received imported blood or blood products.

6. In December 1999, I received a letter from Dr.Toolis to the effect "As a result of blood tests it has come to our attention that you are infected with Hepatitis C possibly from infected blood product. If you would like to discuss the matter further you can phone me at the Hospital" He told me over the phone that it had come to his attention that I had hepatitis C. I asked him how long had he known about my condition. He said he had known for some time. I was in utter shock and felt betrayed. I had known Dr Toolis for 20 years and had a good relationship with him. When I ran the Hotel I had regular gatherings with members of the haemophilia Society. My relationship with Dumfries Haematology Unite and Dr. Toolis was a long one and such that we held several fund raising events at our Hotel for the Haematology Unit at Dumfries. I had formed a trust with Dr Toolis and felt that trust had been broken. He had known for some time that I had hepatitis C but he had not informed me. I remember I asked him over the telephone what the prognosis was. I can always remember he said "There is nothing to worry about". He said, hepatitis C is "not life threatening it is only life shortening". They were his exact words.

7. Dr Toolis gave me no other information about hepatitis C. He did not give me any information about how to manage the infection or the risks of others being infected as a result of the infection. I was already aware of the infection through the haemophilia Society so I understood what it was and its implications for my health and the risks of others being infected. I knew this information from other haemophiliacs who had contracted this infection.

8. In hindsight, giving me this information over the telephone was highly inappropriate. I do believe that I should have been given this information as soon as it was known I had hepatitis C. Dr Toolis said he had known for some time. He did not say for how long he had

known. In my opinion, I should have been given this information as soon as it was discovered.

Section 3. Other Infections

9. I contracted no other infections as a result of being given factor VIII blood products.

Section 4. Consent

10. I do not know at the time that I was tested for hepatitis C without my knowledge or consent.

Section 5. Impact

11. I was a hotelier running a thriving business. The hours were long and it was a demanding job. In my 50s, I became aware that I was becoming increasingly fatigued. At the time I put this down to my age and the demands of my job.

12. As a result of my hepatitis C I was attending Dumfries infirmary twice a year for liver scans. As my liver functions began to deteriorate, it became more frequent. I was having liver scans every three months. This was in 2001. I was under the consultant Dr Gillian Jones. She was a liver specialist. Over the next two years my liver functions were deteriorating.

13. In March 2001, Dr Jones said there was a treatment available for hepatitis C. On my next couple of appointments this treatment was not mentioned. I became very frustrated as I wanted to be rid of the infection. I remember writing letters to her asking when I would start this treatment. Eventually, I began a six months course of treatment. This consisted of injecting a substance called interferon into my stomach twice a week. This was self-medicated, I injected myself at

home. I also had a course of tablets called ribavirin. I took two of these tablets a day.

14. I do not believe there were any other treatments available for hepatitis C at that time. If there were any other treatments available I was certainly not offered them.

15. The effects of taking this treatment were immediate. The main effect for me was the constant shaking. I suffered weight loss and felt constantly nauseous. I was extremely fatigued but could only sleep about two hours a night. My skin was constantly itchy. Mentally, I became increasingly stressed, I sank into a deep depression. I appeared to have had a total change of personality. I became very short tempered with very dark moods.

16. I was four months into my treatment when I attended a routine appointment with Dr Jones. I was very unwell and collapsed in front of her. She told me that she would stop the treatment immediately. I remember I felt very disappointed at the time because I was desperate to be cured and although the treatment was making me very ill, I only had two months to go to complete the course.

17. From July 2001 until December 2003 my liver functions were regularly checked. My bleeds in my joints were spontaneous and regular. I was given factor VIII blood products to inject at home.

18. In December 2003, I was at Dumfries infirmary for a routine liver scan. It was discovered that I had a cancerous tumour on my liver. I was sent to Edinburgh infirmary and was admitted for assessment for a liver transplant. Following extensive tests it was decided that I was a suitable candidate for a liver transplant. I was in hospital for 10 days and received a thorough assessment, I was under the care of Dr Bathgate, the liver specialist.

19. On Friday, 13th February 2004, I received a phone call at home from Edinburgh hospital informing me that they had got a suitable liver donor. I was taken by ambulance to Edinburgh infirmary where I received my transplant. I recovered very well after the operation and was discharged after 13 days.

20. After my transplant I had to attend Edinburgh infirmary every fortnight for routine check-ups. It was on one of these appointments that it was discovered that my hepatitis C was still virile.

21. In 2005 I was offered a year's treatment of interferon and ribavirin to clear my infection. I was daunted by this prospect because of my reaction to this treatment previously, nevertheless I was keen to clear myself of the infection so I agreed to the treatment.

22. I do not know whether it was because I had a healthy liver but my symptoms whilst on the treatment this time were not as severe. I did have the same reactions physically and mentally but I was able to complete the treatment. After 12 months I was given the all clear and I was clear of hepatitis C. I continued to go back to Edinburgh infirmary every six months for a routine check-up. Now I only go once a year.

23. I do not believe my infected status had any impact upon my treatment, medical or dental care for ever any other conditions.

24. The impact of being infected with hepatitis C was minimal to my family life. We are a very loving and close knit family. My wife was very supportive of me when I was going through the treatment. My depression and mood swings must have made her life very difficult. She does say I became a different person. The impact for me, personally, in contracting hepatitis C obviously was distressing and caused me to have to undergo a serious operation, that of the liver transplant. Nevertheless upon receiving my healthy liver I am now clear of haemophilia.

25. I am aware that there is a stigma associated with the diagnosis of hepatitis C. I was not affected in any way by the stigma. As I am aware, nor were my family.

26. When in my 50s, I became tired and fatigued I decided to put my financial future a priority. When I got the opportunity to sell my hotel, I did so. I am financially secure.

Section 6. Treatment, care, support

27. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care and support in consequence of being infected with hepatitis C. My treatment at Edinburgh infirmary under Dr Bathgate was superb. I cannot emphasise how grateful and thankful I am for his care and support and that of his medical team.

Section 7. Financial assistance

28. In 2001, I received a lump sum of £20,000. In 2005, I received a further lump sum of £25,000. On 20th April 2011 I received the first monthly payment of £1100. These monthly payments were indexed as follows;

    2012/2013 - £1157
    2013/2014- £1182
    2014/2015 - £1214
    2015/2016 - £1229
    2016/2017 - £1229

    There then followed a review increase from April 2017 of £2250 per month.

29. I found out that I was entitled to financial assistance through the haemophilia group. I applied to the Skipton fund. I remember Dr Jones had the forms to fill in for over five months and I was getting extremely

frustrated at the delay in returning the forms.

30. I can make no other observations regarding the process of applying for financial assistance and I am not aware if there were any preconditions imposed on the making for financial assistance.

Section 8. Other issues

31. I am happy to report that I am now well and I have enjoyed a full and active life with my wife for the last 15 years. I shall always be grateful to the medical and surgical teams in Edinburgh who have transformed my life.

32. In retrospect I know that many years of my life were ruined by my infection with worry regarding my future life expectancy. I do still however, harbour distain for the importation of contaminated blood into this country and the indifference towards the many who were affected.

33. I was on the fringe of the Penrose enquiry and did attend a hearing at Edinburgh on one occasion. It was a total waste of the £11 million of taxpayers money.

34. I do not wish to remain anonymous in this enquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **GRO-C**

Dated 9/2/19