

Witness Name: Danielle Mullan

Statement No. WITN2439001

Dated: 18th February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DANIELLE MULLAN

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 12th December 2018. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Danielle Mullan, will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. My name is Danielle Mullan. My date of birth and address are known to the Inquiry.
2. I live with my husband and young daughter. I work at Boots as a Sales Assistant.

3. I am a daughter of Marie Cromie. I also have an older brother, Russell.

2. How Infected

1. My mother was somebody who enjoyed good health. I was not aware that she had any underlying health issues. She led a full and active life as a young woman.
2. After she had my brother Russell in 1981 she returned home from hospital. It must have been a week or two later that she suddenly collapsed at home. She was rushed to Craigavan Hospital. She had a blood transfusion.
3. She was in hospital for a few days.
4. By 2005 my mother was a school traffic controller ("lollypop lady"). She started to feel very tired and weak. Her legs started giving her a lot of pain. She found standing very difficult.
5. My mother went to the local health centre and saw her GP who told her to go along to hospital. At Belfast City Hospital they took some blood for tests.
6. Following the weekend, on the Monday, mum was given an appointment to see the Gastroenterologist. He told her, very bluntly, that she had Hepatitis C. I was stunned and shocked. He apparently started asking her about whether she had taken drugs, whether she had had any tattoos, had she "slept around". Of course none of those things applied to her. Asking mum such questions was terribly upsetting.
7. She was then referred to a doctor at the Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast who was a liver specialist. She was told that as a result of her

Hepatitis C she had developed liver sclerosis and they would have to keep a close eye on her.

8. She was told many years later after her first liver operation by her Consultant Dr. Calendar at the Royal Hospital, that he had looked back at her records, and that he believed she had received infected blood in Craigavan when she had the bleed after the birth of my brother Russell.

9. We have seen a note in my mother's medical records dated 2nd November 1981 which says 'picture suggestive of infective hepatitis.' However, no one ever told my mother about his note.

3. Other Infections

1. I am not aware of my mother receiving any infection or infections other than Hepatitis C.

4. Consent

1. I believe my mother was given infected blood without her knowledge or consent. I believe that the National Health Service (NHS) and the doctors knew that they were using contaminated blood and knew that there was a change of complications being caused as a result of giving this, but those not to tell us that they were using contaminated blood.

5. Impact

1. Mum had been told that as a result of her Hepatitis C she had liver sclerosis starting and they would have to keep a close eye on her.

2. It was a terrible time for me, as I was still in school. I found it hard to take in at the time, the seriousness of how ill my mother was.

3. All this meant that I struggled with my GCSE exams. With my mother so ill and my father still working shifts, responsibility for doing lots of the cleaning and cooking and domestic chores around the house fell on me. There was no-one else. It was very wearing and stressful.
4. I did not achieve my full potential in my GCSE's. I wanted to go to college to do child care, but because I did not make the grades, I had to go and work in shops. I worked in shops, bars and restaurants. I still work in retail to this day. I have got on alright in retail but I still sometimes think "what if". If I had done better in my GCSE's, gone to college, how would my life be different now?
5. I can recall that I just did not have time to do all my school work. I was doing GCSE Art and I can recall having to do a drawing assignment back and forth on the school bus because I was so pressed for time.
6. At this time my mother spent a lot of time in bed because she was so ill. My father was working shifts. Therefore, I became like a mother to my mother. I would get off the school bus, go home, go into the house and immediately start cooking for the family. I would be doing lots of chores around the house.
7. Rather than a child, I found myself becoming my mother's carer. It was like a total reversal of roles. I was having to take charge of the household, apart from times when she was feeling relatively well. Even if she felt well, she could not do an awful lot.
8. This was a very difficult period in my last years at school. It somehow got round the school that my mother had Hepatitis C and everybody thought it was some kind of contagious disease. Some children would not stand too close to me. They would not touch me or touch a cup that I had drank from. It was as if I was some sort of leper. You would see other children looking at you and whispering about you. There were times when they would not even pass me the ball in netball.

9. There were also rumours about the fact that my mother was an alcoholic because of her liver problems. In Northern Ireland people associate liver problems with alcohol abuse, particularly given the case of George Best which was very prominent at that time.
10. I can remember being at home when my mother was violently ill. It was around 2005. My father, who was working at the time, was out. I can remember that evening so vividly. My mother wanted me to dye her hair. She had gone upstairs and I was wondering why she was taking so long. My brother went upstairs and suddenly he was shouting and screaming for me.
11. She was on the bed and appeared to have been sick in a basin. However, it did not smell like sick, it was red. It was blood, lots of it. It shocked me.
12. We knew about her Hepatitis and we had been advised not to touch her if she was to bleed. She was though bringing up more blood. I can remember that she must have filled a couple of basins full.
13. My brother and I got a neighbour who was a nurse and we also got another neighbour to help us as well.
14. We could not contact my father because he was at a meeting and the Pay As You Go phones me and my brother had were out of credits.
15. I can still vividly remember the shock of seeing my mother in this way. I genuinely thought she was going to die.
16. It seemed a long time, but was probably only ten minutes or so before the paramedics turned up from the hospital. She was taken to the Royal Hospital and by that time we had managed to get hold of my father and my granddad and we met them there.

17. At the hospital we were told that it was touch and go as to whether she would survive the night. I expected to receive a call at any time then telling me that my mother had died. However, the call I did get in the morning said that they managed to stop the bleed and that she was in intensive care.
18. She was told that she had varices in her gullet and they had burst and her liver was badly damaged. She would need a liver transplant.
19. There was a frustrating and worrying wait for the new liver. We began gradually getting to the point of no return, where mum would be too ill and it would be too late to give her a new liver. If that happened, she was bound to die.
20. At one point they thought they had found a liver, but it turned out to be a mis-match. That was a crushing blow. Then virtually, at the last possible minute, they got word that they had a possible match. We were told that my mother's old liver was cancerous.
21. My mother was then flown to Kings Hospital in London to undergo the liver transplant. I can remember being absolutely stunned to have been told that the cause of her serious illness was down to being given infected blood all those years ago. My dad was furious.
22. Mum was okay after the first liver transplant for around 6 months but then she began suffering from bloating. Her stomach would swell up as if she was heavily pregnant. We were told that it was caused by fluid gathering in the stomach. For the next 12-15 months she was going back and forth to hospital every couple of weeks. She would have to stay in and have the fluid drained. They would take up to 8 litres from her stomach each time.

23. She also began suffering from jaundice and her visits to hospital and stays there became longer and longer.
24. She was told that the Hepatitis C had attacked the new liver and that the only long term solution was to have yet another liver transplant.
25. The problem was though, that the Hepatitis C had to be cleared up before she could have a new liver
26. In 2007 I was working in a shop called "International". It was a clothing shop. I was there for a year and then left. I came back though as a Supervisor but I was spending so much time having to deal with my mother that I lost my job.
27. I left home in 2009 for about 6 months but then came home again. By that time, my father had retired, so was around a lot more.
28. In my 20's I found the only way of blocking out the upset and stress about my mother was to go out and to work. I worked long hours. It was not good for me, but for a few hours I would have some release from my day to day worries.
29. Mum became involved in a programme at Kings Hospital London to be assessed for a drug to clear Hepatitis C. She had to fly to Kings Hospital for a trial. There were only a handful of people doing this trial. However, it was not working and mum was getting too weak to make the journeys.
30. The Royal Hospital in Belfast said that they had got funding for a different drug and they put mum on that programme. At first it made her very ill. It was a terrible three months whilst she underwent treatment of that drug. It's side effects made her forgetful and doing stupid things. It made her very anxious. However, the drug began to work and it is my understanding that it cleared the Hepatitis C

- sufficient enough for mum to go forward to have the second liver transplant:
31. Things were further complicated now because she had developed two massive hernias. By this stage, I was pregnant.
 32. Mum was taken to Kings Hospital in London to wait for a new liver. She was in Kings for eight weeks just lying there ill, separated from us back in Belfast, waiting for the new liver. There seemed to be no sign.
 33. The Consultant at Kings told mum that he had more or less given up hope of finding a liver. He told her that she should go home to be with the family. My daughter was only a few months' old at this stage, and it felt like mum had spent no time with her at all.
 34. I can recall her flying back on the Tuesday of that week to the Royal. We had resigned ourselves to her dying.
 35. However, in the early hours of Friday of that week, they suddenly told us they had found a match and mum was flown back to Kings. There she had a transplant to receive the second liver. This was in 2015.
 36. Mum was in ICU for about a week and another few weeks in a ward at Kings. She then returned to the Royal Hospital Belfast for a few weeks and then home. Mum must have been away 3 or 4 months in total.
 37. For the past eighteen months mum has had a problem with the liver being blocked. They keep having to put stents in to keep it open. We have been told that they do not want to keep doing this as it is going to cause long term problems. They are not putting another one in, but we have been told that the next time it blocks, mum will need to be rushed to Royal Victoria and a temporary stent put in and then flown to Kings Hospital in London to remove the bile duct.

38. The nerve ends in mums feet and legs have been damaged and we believe that might have been as a result of the lengthy operation she had with the second liver transplant. She has back problems which we believe was caused when she had the swelling in her stomach.
39. Mum is on a heavy regime of drugs.
40. Dad has been very supportive, but it is as though he has had to put his life on hold to care for mum. He retired as soon as he was able, at the age of 50, to care for her.
41. There are some days when mum seems reasonably okay but there are a lot of days when she feels terrible.
42. Mum's quality of life is still very limited. She is very weak. She gets tired and fatigued easily. She is constantly sick. She has gout in my fingers and legs, which causes her great pain in her joints.
43. When mum is not feeling too bad, she can potter around the house. She cannot though really go out anywhere on her own, someone from the family has be with her. She has to pace herself and make sure that she sits down regularly and do not over do it.
44. Mum has missed a lot of family occasions, such as weddings and engagements. When my brother Russell got married mum was in hospital at the Royal. Russell said that he was prepared to cancel the wedding but that was the last thing mum wanted. She had lost a lot of weight, going down from a size 16 to a size 8. However she went to the wedding, it was a terrible struggle but she tried to put on a brave face. She missed my daughter's first birthday as she was one again in hospital.

45. There is a terrible stigma still about someone with Hepatitis C. People think you are a carrier of some terrible disease.
46. People also associated liver transplants with somebody who is an alcoholic, but my mother has never drunk.
47. She can not go out very far without one of us accompanying her from the family.
48. I learned to drive specifically so if there was an emergency, I could get my mother to hospital. I did not want something happening again, like when her gullet burst.
49. I was concerned about whether my close contact with my mother might have caused me to be infected with Hepatitis C, so I had myself tested. I was given the all clear but I am concerned, albeit probably irrationally, about somehow passing on Hepatitis C to my daughter. Doctors told me the chances of me having Hepatitis C were slim, but there is still that word "CHANCE".
50. I only live about 5 miles away from my mother but I am always worried about her falling ill.
51. I always have to have a phone on, with me and fully charged.
52. I am always worried that my car will break down, so I am always pressing my husband, who is a mechanic to service the car every few weeks.
53. If a member of my family is going somewhere and they do not contact me to tell me they are okay, I get stressed out. I was never like that before my mother's illness.

54. My **GRO-C** became ill at the beginning of this year and I had to take out Power of Attorney. I had to sort her out regarding a care home. I had to deal with solicitors and the sale of her house. This is all the kind of thing, if she had been well, my mother would have dealt with. However, because of her illness there was no way she could do that, so the responsibility fell onto me.

55. It all got too much for me. In March of this year, I had a migraine and I suddenly was taken ill in work. My vision went all squew-iff, my face was drooping. I was working in Boots and went to the Pharmacy counter but I found I could not talk. I then collapsed. People thought I had had some sort of stroke. I was taken to the Royal Hospital. I was told that I had not had a stroke but had had a sort of stress related episode. I was put on beta-blockers. This was also at the same time that my mother was in Kings Hospital. This and the problems with **GRO-C** had all got too much for me.

56. I always had a dream that my mother and I would go Christmas shopping in New York. However, that will never happen because she is not well enough to do long haul travel and we would never get insurance for it. Instead of having happy memories of my mother, it is now coloured by the horrid memories of her illness.

6. Treatment/Care/Support

1. My mother struggled physically with her illness and as a result, missed out on treatment which could only be provided in England as she was too weak to travel.
2. Counselling or psychological support has never been offered or made available to my mother or myself.

7. Financial Assistance

1. I believe my mother made an application to the Skipton Fund and received £25,000 payment for Hepatitis C and a further payment for having undergone the liver transplant.

8. **Other Issues**

1. I do not have anything to add to this section.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 18/2/19