

**Witness Name: Royal Free Hospital (Debra Anne Pollard)**

**Statement No.: WITN3094111**

**Exhibits: WITN3094112-WITN309419**

**Dated: 2023-08-15**

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DEBRA ANNE POLLARD**

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I provide this statement on behalf of the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (the "Trust") in response to the request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 20 July 2022.

I, Debra Anne Pollard of the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, Pond Street, London, NW3 2QG, will say as follows:

#### **Section 1: Introduction**

1. I am employed by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust ("the Trust") as a Lead Nurse Specialist within the Haemophilia & Thrombosis Centre ("the Centre"). I have worked for the Trust as a Clinical Nurse Specialist since February 1992 and have been in my current role since May 2014. In October 2020 I retired from my full-time post, however I remain in a part-time post as an Advanced Nurse Practitioner. I have therefore worked at the Centre for 30 years.
2. For the purposes of preparing this statement, I have reviewed W1704's late father's medical records held by the Trust. The information provided within the witness statement is based upon facts within my knowledge, save for where I have indicated the source of my information or belief. Where matters are not directly within my knowledge, I believe them to be true.
3. As the Lead Nurse Specialist, my responsibilities until 2020 included leading and managing a team of specialist nurses and allied health professionals. I was also responsible, together with

the Centre Director, for the strategic development and management of the department. I continue, in a part time role, as an Advanced Nurse Practitioner.

4. In my role as Lead Nurse Specialist, I have been responsible on a number of occasions for answering questions from the Infected Blood Inquiry ("the Inquiry"). As a result, I am aware of some of the issues surrounding the Inquiry and know how to investigate matters arising within our archives and systems.
5. I make this statement in response to criticisms made by W1704 in relation to the treatment of her late father at the Royal Free Hospital. The Inquiry has requested that the Trust respond to the criticisms at paragraph 8 of W1704's statement dated 12 November 2019.
6. I attach to this statement exhibits **WITN3094112-WITN309419** These are extracts from the Trust's records detailing various aspects of W1704's late father's care which are relevant to the criticisms made by W1704

## **Section 2: Background**

7. W1704's late father was born on GRO-B 1953. He had mild Haemophilia A which affected his clotting ability. At paragraph 5 of W1704's statement she says:

*... I do not know whether any hospitals were responsible for prescribing or administering the Factor VIII concentrate to treat his Haemophilia. I am unaware as to the dates he received treatment or if any information was given to him regarding the risks.*

8. W1704's late father was first seen at the Royal Free Hospital in 1991 when he was treated for a very significant bleed in his leg which required multiple treatments with Factor VIII. By 1991 this treatment was virally inactivated; this exposure to clotting factor was after the defined "danger" period and there has been no known transmission of Hepatitis C from Factor VIII since 1991. He gave clinicians at the Royal Free Hospital a history of having been treated at St Mary's Hospital in about 1979 for bleeding after a tooth extraction. If this was his first exposure to clotting factor concentrate then it is likely this was when he contracted Hepatitis C (see Exhibit **WITN3094112**).

9. At paragraph 11 of her statement W1704 says that, to her knowledge, her late father was not infected with HIV or Hepatitis B. Save for Hepatitis C, there were no other known viruses found on her late father virology screening, including HIV and Hepatitis B.

### **Section 3: Response to Criticisms by W1704**

10. At paragraph 8 of W1704's statement she says:

*I do not know when he was informed that he had been infected with Hepatitis C. There appears to be a gap between his test results and when it was formally discussed with him. I refer to Exhibit WITN1704003 which is a copy of his blood test results from the Department of Virology at the Royal Free Hospital dated 17 April 1991 which show that he tested positive for Hepatitis C antibodies meaning that he was infected with Hepatitis C by this point.*

11. When W1704's late father first registered at the Royal Free on 17 April 1991 a full virology screen was requested. The blood test would have been taken before his first treatment as this was standard practice. It is recorded in the notes from a meeting with Dr Laffan on 19 April 1991 that testing was discussed and that W1704's late father initially did not consent to the HIV test but then changed his mind after discussion with his wife. This suggests that the testing was discussed with W1704's late father and he consented (**see Exhibit WITN3094112**). It is likely, but not recorded, that her late father was told of the Hepatitis C when the result was first available during his first admission in 1991. A letter from Dr Eleanor Goldman dated 7 October 1993 details that they discussed hepatitis and that W1704's late father seemed "well informed" (**see Exhibit WITN3094113**).

12. W1704 Says at paragraph 10 of her statement that she does not know whether the risks associated with receiving blood products were clearly explained to her late father prior to treatment, and that he likely would have declined treatment if he had known that the blood products were not properly screened. At paragraph 12 W1704 goes on to say 'I don't believe my father gave informed consent to treatment. I am unaware as to whether he was tested with or without his knowledge or consent'. W1704 's late father was already infected with Hepatitis C when he first attended the Royal Free Hospital, and the Trust cannot comment on what was discussed with him prior to receiving blood products at other hospitals. As above, W1704's late father appears to have had a discussion with Dr Laffan on 19 April 1991 about the viral screen performed when he first registered at the Royal Free on 17 April 1991 (**see Exhibit WITN3094112**).

13. At paragraph 9 of W1704's statements she addresses the treatment of her late father received in respect of Hepatitis C:

*It was not until 7 May 1999 that a medical letter states, presented as Exhibit **WITN1704004** that he was reviewed in liver/haemophilia clinic at the Royal Free Hospital regarding his diagnosis of chronic Hepatitis C type 1. During this appointment Alpha Interferon and Ribavirin treatment, response rate and side effects were explained to him and an information sheet about the necessity for monthly checks and active contraception.*

14. From W1704's late father's first attendance at the Royal Free Hospital in 1991 he had annual reviews with the Centre, and Hepatitis C and possible treatments were discussed at these reviews. This was and remains the frequency of reviews for patients with mild Haemophilia A, such as W1704's later father. The letter dated 7 May 1999 referred to by W1704 concerns a specific clinic for the Hepatologists to discuss hepatitis treatment with her late father. The standard of care was to see people in the joint Haemophilia/Hepatology Liver Clinic when treatment was being recommended, although as documented in the Liver Clinic letters of 18 June 2001 and 15 July 2002, timing of treatment was not considered clinically critical for W1704's late father at that time, and it was left with him to decide when would be best for him (see Exhibit **WITN3094113**). It is noted that when he was well W704's late father found the burden of attending regular clinics difficult, and as a result there were large gaps in his attendances.

15. At paragraph 10 of W1704's statement she also addresses the timing of her late father's treatment:

*I refer to Exhibit **WITN704005** which is an extract from documentation in his clinical records dated 18 June 2001. This entry states that the issue of Hepatitis C had been addressed and at the time he was asymptomatic. It noted he was reluctant to undertake treatment due to his financial situation as he was unemployed at the time, the doctors left their recommendations with him to start combination treatment in two to three years time.*

16. Hepatitis C treatment at that time (Interferon and Ribavirin) could last from six months to a year depending on the genotype, and could result in long periods of ill health, including needing time off work. As a result it was standard practice to discuss optimal timing of treatment. Treatment was offered to her late father and the letters suggest he wanted to seek

work first and then start treatment. The doctors suggested it may be best embarking on treatment first, but ultimately timing was the patient's decision after discussion.

17. W1704 describes the side-effects her late father experienced from treatment at paragraph 13 of her statement:

*In June 2004, my father commenced Pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin treatment but he was a non-responder and had to stop therapy in December 2004. According to a medical letter dated 1 February 2005, presented as **Exhibit WITN1704006**, the therapy caused a lot of negative side effects including making him feel lethargic and depressed.*

18. The side effects of the Interferon and Ribavirin treatment were explained to W1704 her late father in the Liver Clinic, as described above. Unfortunately this treatment regime can be gruelling and the side effects have a significant impact on many patients. It is a common side effect to have altered mood and lethargy and this can last for significant periods of time after the treatment is stopped. W1704's late father was closely supported by the Centre during his treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin (**see Exhibit WITN3094114**). W1704 says at paragraph 17 of her statement that she does not know whether her late father was offered any counselling or support at this time. The records show that W1704's late father was seen regularly by Mrs Riva Miller, the Centre's Social Worker and Counsellor. **Exhibit WITN3094119**).

19. At paragraph 18 of her statement W1704 queries whether her late father was receiving any financial support. W1704's late father was receiving payments from the Skipton Fund (later England Infected Blood Support Scheme). The Centre helped support his applications for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 payments (**see Exhibit WITN3094116 & Exhibit WITN3094117**). W1704's late father suffered a massive bleeding episode which meant he was advised not to return to work as a panel beater as it was likely to aggravate the previous injury and cause repeat bleeds. After this he was supported by Mrs Elizabeth Boyd, the Centre's Welfare Rights Advisor, who obtained some charitable funding to help him retrain. Professor Lee also wrote to his employer explaining the risk of bleeding and supported his claim for Disability Living Allowance (**see Exhibit WITN3094115 & Exhibit WITN3094118**).

20. It is noted that W1704's late father continuing difficulties with maintaining employment were as a direct result of his haemophilia and bleeding into his iliopsoas muscle which led to an unusual complication known as a pseudo tumour. This left him with significant pain and mobility issues which led to him requiring a change of profession. Sadly he was affected both

physically and mentally by the change in his health and fitness status as a consequence of the bleeds (**see Exhibits WITN3094115- WITN3094118**).

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed: 

**GRO-C**

Dated: 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023

Notes/ Description	Exhibit number
Notes relating to admission in 1991 and review in 1992	WITN3094112
Letters relating to infection of hepatitis C	WITN3094113
Notes relating to interferon treatment dated 2004	WITN3094114
Doctor's report for Disability Living Allowance dated 8 March 2001	WITN3094115
Information for Skipton Fund 22 November 2004	WITN3094116
Information for Skipton fund dated 15 February 2005	WITN3094117
Documents relating to financial support	WITN3094118
Counselling consultation dated 3 March 2004	WITN3094119