

Witness Name: Geoffrey Dusheiko  
Statement No.: WITN3754105  
Exhibits: WITN3754106  
Dated: 15 December 2023

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PROFESSOR GEOFFREY DUSHEIKO**

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I provide this statement on behalf of The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust in response to the notification under Rule 13 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 16 January 2023.

I, Geoffrey Dusheiko, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name, address, date of birth and professional qualifications are as follows:
2. Geoffrey Mark Dusheiko, Liver Unit, Kings College Hospital London UK. GRO-C, 1948 MB BCh (Wits) FCP(SA) FRCP FRCP (Edin).
3. The positions I have held as a doctor, the organisations in which I have held these positions and my role and responsibilities in these positions are as follows:
  1. Intern, Medicine Baragwanath Hospital, Johannesburg, 2 January 1973 to June 1973;
  2. Intern, Surgery Baragwanath Hospital, Johannesburg, July 1973 to December 1973;
  3. Locum Tenens positions January 1974 to July 1974: Paediatric Ward Northwick Park Hospital, Middlesex, U.K; Dr H.B. Valman, General Practice, Johannesburg; A.E.C.I, Modderfontein;
  4. Sen. Intern Paediatrics, Johannesburg Children's Hospital, July to December, 1974;
  5. Sen. Intern Cardiology , Johannesburg Hospital, January to June, 1975;

6. Registrar Medicine (Respiratory, Endocrine, Neurology, Coronary intensive care units, Haematology, General medicine), Johannesburg Hospital, July 1975 to July 1978;
  7. Research Fellow, Liver Unit, Johannesburg Hospital, July 1978 to July 1979;
  8. Visiting research associate, Liver Unit (South African Medical Research Council Fellow), Liver Diseases Section, National Institutes of Health Washington DC USA, August 1979 to July 1981;
  9. Senior Physician (Consultant), Hillbrow and Johannesburg Hospital, August 1981 to December 1983;
  10. Unit Head (Consultant and Ward Head), Hillbrow and Johannesburg Hospital, January 1984 to December 1987;
  11. Guest Researcher (Vice Chancellor's Research Award), Dept of Microbiology, University of Minnesota USA, September 1986 to March 1987;
  12. Senior Lecturer, Academic Dept Medicine, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine, January 1988;
  13. Reader in Medicine, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine, 1989;
  14. Professor of Medicine, Royal Free Hospital and University College School of Medicine 1996;
  15. Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University College London Medical School, January 2014;
  16. Consultant Hepatologist, Royal Free Hospital London, 2014-2016;
  17. Consultant Hepatologist, Liver Unit, Kings College Hospital London UK, 2016- to date;
  18. Interim Deputy Director, Blood safety, Hepatitis HIV and STI National Infection Service, Public Health England, March 2019 to December 2019.
4. I have served on NICE panels, National Institutes of Health USA hepatitis consensus panels, EASL guidelines committees, World Health Organisation advisory boards, WHO guidelines panels, the Skipton Fund, NHS EIBSS and have advised Thalassemia and Haemophilia Societies in the past.
  5. I have been asked to write this witness statement on behalf of the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (" the Trust") to respond to certain criticisms raised in the witness statement of W0521 dated 10 June 2022, in which he raises criticisms regarding the care he received from the Trust in relation to the treatment of his hepatitis C infection which he contracted from transfusion of blood products at Edgware General Hospital.

6. For the purpose of preparing this witness statement I have reviewed the records held by the Trust in relation to W0521 and provide this statement on the basis of those records. Where matters within this statement are not directly within my own knowledge, I believe them to be true.
7. The Inquiry has requested that the Trust respond to criticisms set out at paragraphs 116 - 119 (inclusive) of the witness statement of W0521. This statement addresses the criticisms of W0521 set out in those paragraphs.
8. In addition, this statement also addresses other general remarks in the witness statement of W0521, on which I am able to provide further detail to assist the Inquiry and W0521.
9. My response to the criticisms set out in the witness statement of W0521 are set out in section 2 of this statement.
10. I attach to this statement exhibit **WITN3754106**. These are extracts from the Trust's records detailing various aspects of W0521's care which are relevant to the criticisms made in W0521's statement.

## **Section 2: Response to Criticisms set out in witness statement of W0521**

11. At paragraphs 77 – 78 of his witness statement, W0521 states:

*77. The Royal Free then put me on a course of Interferon and Ribavirin which was to be self-administered at home. I think this came about as a direct result of the information gained through the trial, but then again it may not have been. I was also told that at some point in time I would be called in to see a psychiatrist.*

*78. I can remember being told by the doctors that they believed the combination therapy to have been something that would be good for me, and that I'd have to take it over a period of about six months.*

12. W0521's recollection in paragraph 77 is correct. That is, W0521 kindly consented to participate in a trial to ascertain the pharmacokinetic parameters of a short course of interferon alpha together with ribavirin.
13. In respect of W0521's comments in paragraph 78, I note that at around this time, the benefit of the combination of interferon alpha and ribavirin was becoming apparent in

several published studies and therefore all participants in the trial were offered compassionate interferon and ribavirin to attempt to cure their hepatitis C.

14. At paragraph 82 of his witness statement, W0521 states:

*82. Things deteriorated to such an extent that I told one of the doctors that they would have to take me off of the course before I killed someone. Rather than take me off of the treatment, the dose was reduced, but I continued to have problems and after about four months, and a number of dosage reductions as I struggled to continue with the treatment and its side effects, I stopped – I had to refuse to take it any further before something dreadful happened, I simply couldn't take it anymore.*

15. My review of W0521's clinical notes indicates that W0521 was experiencing mood changes, including depression and anger. These symptoms were reported to the nurse practitioners and physicians monitoring his treatment. These worrisome symptoms are unfortunately known side effects of interferon alpha. In addition, W0521 did not show a satisfactory decline in his HCV RNA concentrations. The side effects of interferon alpha are well known, although were perhaps not as well documented at the time W0521 was treated. Some patients may respond to a reduction in dose, but I believe W0521's insistence on stopping treatment entirely was the right decision – which importantly, he specified.

16. At paragraph 85 of his witness statement, W0521 states:

*85. I have tried to explain to the doctors in London how the side effects had remained even though I had stopped taking the medication, how Interferon and Ribavirin had altered me as a person, but there does not and did not seem to be anything to assist me with this, no medication or other means of addressing their side effects.*

17. As set out above, the side effects of interferon alpha can unfortunately include mood changes, depression and anger. I agree that mood changes and depression are now known to be a well categorised adverse effect in some patients. The long-term effects are probably more difficult to categorise but in my experience, depression can persist, although the effects of the disease, treatment failure and disappointment may also be a factor.

18. Sadly, the Trust did not have the appropriate funding and staffing for mental health counselling for patients with hepatitis C (as opposed to the HIV service).

19. At paragraph 113 of his witness statement, W0521 states:

*113. I have already detailed many of the elements of my treatment, care and support, but would additionally like to state that no counselling or other form of psychological support was ever offered to my family or I until such time as we moved to Luton and I believe that it should have been.*

20. Sadly, as set out above, at that time no NHS funding for mental health support for our patient cohort was available. Later, as the Trust acquired more experience and funding, psychiatric liaison improved. However, the timing of W0521's treatment coincided with the early days of the epidemic of hepatitis C and its management and at times we struggled to provide holistic care to patients.

21. At paragraph 116 of his witness statement, W0521 states:

*116. I didn't receive a great deal of support through the Royal Free Hospital. I'd initially been a patient of the Edgware General Hospital, but for conditions such as mine, they referred patients to the Royal Free and although some local monitoring activity took place, my care was through the specialists at the Royal Free and not Edgware.*

22. As hepatologists, we struggled to provide first hand holistic support for patients with depression and mental health consequences of hepatitis C and its treatment, as exemplified by W0521. We would have welcomed easier access and linkage to care by a clinical psychologist for patients attending our service. Psychiatric opinions were sought for individual patients after risk assessment, but this service was also overburdened: as are mental health services to this day.

23. At paragraph 117 of his witness statement, W0521 states:

*117. Initially this arrangement worked well but as time went on, and certainly by the time I moved to Bedfordshire, the administrative side of things at the Royal Free had deteriorated to such a point as to cause me to change hospitals, and almost immediately I saw an improvement as the Luton & Dunstable Hospital appeared far more proactive in their care provisions.*

24. I do not recall receipt of a specific complaint by W0521. I note that on occasion W0521 did not attend appointments, but I am not able to comment on whether these missed appointments were the result of administrative errors.

25. At paragraphs 118 – 119 of his witness statement, W0521 states:

*118. Once I'd tried, and found myself having to abandon, the treatment course using Interferon and Ribavirin, the Royal Free offered me nothing new, no alternatives, and it wasn't until 2018 that I was offered a different medication to treat the Hepatitis C*

*infection, and this was at the L&D. I do not know why this, or any other drug which may have become available in the interim, had not been offered to me by the Royal Free.*

*119. All the Royal Free ever offered was the combination drug, or then Interferon or Ribavirin separately. Staff there did not seem to recognise my concerns as to the use of these drugs, based on the problems I had experienced, some of which were (and remain) ongoing. Through them, it was Interferon, Ribavirin or nothing at all.*

26. Unfortunately, at the time that W0521 received treatment with interferon and ribavirin, no alternative interferon free regimens were possible. I am unable to comment further on his follow up at the Royal Free Hospital or at Luton and Dunstable after I retired from the Royal Free. However, I believe the correspondence to W0521 does report to the patient the advent of interferon free oral regimens (see **Exhibit WITN3574106** ). W0521 should, and would have been, offered new direct acting antiviral combinations as these were licenced and were funded by the NHS on the advice of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE). I trust that W0521 has received a NHS funded direct acting oral antiviral treatment (after the first generation regimens were approved by NICE) at Luton and Dunstable Hospital, and, like many other patients who endured interferon treatment, has been cured of his chronic hepatitis C. I also can only lend my support to his expressed need for mental health support.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_15 December 2023\_\_\_\_\_

GRO-C

Dusheiko

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### **Table of exhibits:**

Notes/ Description	Exhibit number
Extracts from medical records of W0521	WITN3754106