

Witness Name: Suzanne Rankin
Statement No.: WITN4665023
Exhibits: WITN0600001
Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SUZANNE RANKIN

I provide this statement on behalf of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board ("the Health Board") in response to the request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 06 July 2022.

I, Suzanne Rankin, will say as follows: -

Section 1: Introduction

1. My name is Suzanne Rankin, my professional address is Woodland House, Maes y Coed Road, Cardiff, CF14 4HH. My date of birth is GRO-C1967. My professional qualifications are as follows:

Master of Arts Defence Studies (Merit) Kings College London	2006
ENB 219 Orthopaedic Nursing Certificate	1994
ENB 998 Teaching and Assessing in Clinical Practice	1993
Registered General Nurse (Not currently on the register)	1990

2. I am the current Chief Executive Officer at the Health Board .

Section 2: Response to Criticisms by inquiry witness W0600

3. I would first like to offer my apologies to W0600 for the suffering that W0600 has endured as a result of his infection with Hepatitis C.
4. I would also like to share my comments in relation to concerns that W0600 has raised at paragraphs 4, 6, 31 – 32 and 36 of his statement.

Paragraph 6 of Statement WITN0600001

5. At Paragraph 4 of his statement W0600 shares that his mother had informed him that, '...she was never informed by the doctors, nurses or any hospital staff of any potential risk of exposure to contaminated blood at the time.' Regrettably, the Health Board does not hold medical records for W0600 for the period covering his operation and blood transfusion in 1983 (Please see paragraphs 14 – 16 of this statement for further information regarding records that the Health Board does hold) and I am therefore

unable to comment on the advice that W0600 and his Mother would have received in 1983. Nevertheless, on behalf of the Health Board, I apologise if the risks, as they were known in 1983, were not made abundantly clear to W0600 and his Mother.

6. At Paragraph 6 of his statement W0600 described how he was informed of his Hepatitis C diagnosis by Dr [GRO-D] at the University Hospital of Wales, commenting that, 'I feel that Dr [GRO-D] downplayed the seriousness of my infection. He gave me the impression that it was something I could live with and that it was nothing to worry about. He told me that there was no need for me to start any treatment then as the HCV was stable. It seemed to me that he did not know the long-term consequences of such a diagnosis himself.'
7. On behalf of the Health Board I am sorry that the treatment and communication W0600 received in 1997 gave the impression that the Health Board's employees had downplayed the severity of his infection. The Health Board acknowledges that the communication W0600 received in 1997 may not have prepared him for the development of his infection over the following years, however it is important to take into consideration the context and timing of those early appointments.
8. In 1997 we knew much less about Hepatitis C than we know now. At the time of W0600's initial appointments we did not have the same level of understanding of the natural history of the Hepatitis C Virus infection, nor the risk and timescale of progression to significant chronic liver disease and cirrhosis. The Hepatitis C Virus was only identified in 1988 and testing/screening was not available until 1991. I am also advised that the treatment available in 1997 (Interferon Monotherapy) was, in comparison with today's standards, not very effective with unpleasant side-effects and cure rates of between 15-20%.
9. Whilst I was not party to W0600's initial consultations I have been reassured that advice provided in 1997 would have been consistent with prevailing clinical knowledge and medical consensus at the time. I accept that the above will not reduce or remedy the anguish that W0600 has experienced, however I hope that the above comments provide some reassurance that the advice shared with W0600 in 1997 would not have been an intentional downplaying of his infection but instead a reflection of the clinical knowledge and understanding of his condition at the time.

Paragraphs 31 – 32 of Statement WITN0600001

10. At Paragraph 31 of his witness statement, W0600 states, 'I always felt disconnected from the treatment I was receiving. The Specialists at the University Hospital seemed to me to have a 'god complex'. My fear and suffering were diminished. In fact, when I asked Dr Brendan Healy about the life expectancy of someone with Hepatitis C he told me, "well we all die don't we?". There was very little sympathy.'
11. The Health Board is pleased to hear that the care W0600 received under Dr Healy was more successful and resulted in clearance of the virus. The Health Board is however sorry to hear that W0600 didn't feel that they received sufficient sympathy during their visits to the University Hospital of Wales. The Health Board would like to reassure W0600 you that everyone involved in their care does have sympathy for their condition and has done everything possible to provide the correct treatment and support in all matters. Discussions in relation to chronic diseases can be difficult and involve difficult conversations about mortality. The Health Board is sorry that on this occasion the information was not delivered in a manner that was appropriate to W0600's needs at the time. The Health Board and I can reassure you that this was not the intention of the doctor involved and he is sorry to hear that his interactions with W0600 has caused the upset described. In addition since 2016 "the Health Board" has placed six core values at the heart of all that it does; Trust, Respect, Integrity, Care, Kindness and Personal Responsibility. It is clear from W0600's comments at paragraph 31 of statement WITN0600001 that W0600 was not made to feel as though he was treated with Respect or Kindness whilst under the care of the Health Board and for this I would like to provide an unreserved apology to W0600.
12. At Paragraph 32 of his witness statement W0600 states, 'I have never been offered any form of counselling or psychological support by the National Health Service (NHS) or any of my treating doctors. Any counselling I have received in the past, I have had to seek out myself.'
13. In Wales support is provided to people who have been infected with Hepatitis C and/or HIV as a result of NHS treatment with blood, blood products or tissue by the Wales Infected Blood Support Scheme (WIBSS). The contact details for the WIBSS Psychology and Wellbeing Service can be accessed via the following website: <https://wibss.wales.nhs.uk/the-psychology-wellbeing-service/>. I acknowledge that W0600 has not historically received the counselling of psychological support that he

needed from the NHS and would like to offer the Health Board's assistance to W0600 in securing such support moving forward, either via the WIBSS or otherwise.

Paragraph 36 of Statement WITN0600001

14. At paragraph 36 of his witness statement W0600 states, 'I would also like it noted that all but my most recent medical records have been lost by the university Hospital. I had seen my records on previous occasions and know them to be thick binders. I am told that they are nowhere to be found which I find highly improbable and suspicious that the hospital may have something to hide.'
15. I have requested that the Health Board's Access to Records department undertake a search for W0600's records and I am advised that the Health Board holds records for W0600 dating back to 1984.
16. I apologise if previous requests made by W0600 for access to his records have been unsuccessful and for any anguish or distress that this may have caused. As confirmed at paragraph 15 above, the Health Board holds records for W0600 dating back to 1984, should W0600 require access to these records, as is his right, I am happy to facilitate the full disclosure of all medical records for W0600 held by the Health Board.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

11.9.2023

Table of exhibits:

Date	Notes/ Description	Exhibit number
14/11/2019	Witness Statement	WITN0600001