

Witness Name: P Kirkpatrick  
Statement No: WITN1333001  
Exhibits: 0  
Dated: January 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PAUL KIRKPATRICK

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I, Paul Kirkpatrick, will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Paul Kirkpatrick. I was born on **GRO-C** 1965 and I live at **GRO-C** **GRO-C** I live with my wife and two twin boys. I am in full time employment as an engineering manager for DuPont UK Limited.
2. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.**

#### Section 2. How infected

3. I have severe Haemophilia A. I started taking Factor VIII in May 1976 and I believe that I was infected with Hepatitis C sometime after that.
4. I was treated at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast under the care of Dr Elizabeth Mayne. Neither my parents nor I were provided with any information regarding the risks of Factor VIII. In fact my parents were told that Factor VIII was a 'wonder drug' and that they had nothing to worry about.

5. In or around 1983/84, when the AIDS scare was rife, Dr Mayne told a group of Haemophiliac patients, myself included, that we could be infected with HIV. We were all sat together in a room at the Royal Victoria Hospital when we received this frightening information. They took our bloods and we were then sent home. After a considerable period of time, I was again summonsed to the same hospital and Dr Mayne advised that I had not contracted HIV.
6. In or around 1987, whilst I was attending a routine clinic appointment at the same hospital, Dr Mayne very casually slipped into the conversation that I had contracted non-A non-B Hepatitis. Some time after this, I was then told by Dr Mayne, again in a very casual way, that I had Hepatitis C. She told me that it was nothing to worry about as I had probably had it for years and if it had not affected me yet then I would probably be ok. In one meeting we were told that there was Factor VIII which was safe and clean and there was another Factor VIII which was potentially contaminated. I was told that I was going to be given potentially contaminated blood as I was already contaminated and those that were younger would get the 'clean' blood. I remember at the time actually thanking the doctor for this!
7. At no stage was I provided with adequate information regarding the management of Hepatitis C or risk of transmission to others. Rather, I was led to believe that my infection was a minor issue and that there was no risk of infecting others.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

8. I cannot remember the date of the letter but I recall receiving one from the Royal Victoria Hospital, advising that I had been put at risk of vCJD. The letter contained a tick box which was to be filled in if I wanted to find out more about this.
9. I found it deeply distressing that the hospital told me that I had been put at risk of a very serious virus and that they employed the use of tick box to

record if patients required further information. I believe that this was handled very badly and this letter had a significantly negative impact on my wife in that she became significantly upset. Such was our outrage that we drove to the Royal Victoria Hospital that day to discuss the matter with a consultant, who was able to confirm that I had not been given Factor VIII from a vCJD donor.

#### **Section 4. Consent**

10. I believe I was probably tested for HIV before 1985 without my knowledge and therefore without my consent. Blood was taken from me on multiple occasions and I was never advised as to why or for what purposes it was required.

11. I was never advised that I was being tested for non-A non-B Hepatitis or Hepatitis C which it became known as in due course. I was therefore tested, probably numerous times, without my knowledge or consent. I was unaware that I was Hepatitis B positive throughout this time until I received my medical notes this year.

#### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

12. Aside from my Haemophilia, I was remarkably healthy. However, this changed when I was treated with Interferon and Ribavirin in or around 1999. Following this treatment, I suffered with bowel problems, including serious diarrhoea, and I became very tired and depressed; so much so that my family and friends thought that I had become a completely different person. I would have been described as a pleasant, unflappable character and had changed into an impatient irritable person.

13. In the years after the interferon treatment I also developed a persistent cough that would not clear and therefore sought medical assistance and was diagnosed with Sarcoidosis. There is significant research linking Sarcoidosis to interferon treatment.

14. I also developed eczema and asthma which were conditions that I had never suffered from prior to undergoing the Hepatitis C treatment.

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16. The treatment was truly horrendous and I felt floored, nauseous and had no energy. These symptoms, coupled with the severe diarrhoea, meant that I was absent from work for a significant period of time, for the first time in my working life.

17. It was extremely upsetting that both the chief clinical nurse and the senior registrar told me that I was just imagining all of my symptoms and they kept telling me that everything would be fine. I even began to doubt my own sanity.

18. Whilst I was on the treatment my wife and I were trying for a baby. Dr Orla McNulty was overseeing my treatment from Dr Mayne, who was about to retire, and I asked her if there were any issues with conceiving whilst I was undergoing the treatment. She told me that there were no issues whatsoever and to continue our plans to have a baby. We continued to try for a baby but my wife did not fall pregnant and I became increasingly poorly.

19. Around this time, my wife began researching the treatment I was on and discovered a warning on a pharmaceutical website which very clearly stated that people undergoing this treatment must not try and conceive under any circumstances. I was so shocked by my wife's discovery and was so angry that Dr McNulty had failed to advise us of this and allowed me to put both my wife and my unborn child(ren) at risk. We met Dr McNulty and handed her the warning notices from the drug companies. Both my wife and I distinctly remember that conversation, even the room we had it in. This was a defining moment in our lack of confidence with the hospital.

20. I really wanted to discontinue the treatment due to the severe side effects I was suffering. However, Dr McNulty informed us that there was an issue with the laboratory testing and the results could not be guaranteed as there were inaccuracies and some internal issues. It was agreed with Dr McNulty that I should discontinue the treatment for the time being. Therefore, despite enduring all of the side effects of the treatment and the risks of trying to conceive whilst on the treatment, I still had Hepatitis C.

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**GRO-C**

22. I was still suffering from the effects of Hepatitis C **GRO-C** **GRO-C** when our twins were born in 2001. Given that it would be another 10 or 11 years until I was cleared of the virus, I was extremely paranoid that my twins would become infected.

23. My wife and I had to be extremely careful with blood spillages which needed clearing immediately and there was an added concern due to my eczema as I often bled as a result of this. Everything was being constantly cleaned in order to protect the twins; the safety of our twins was paramount. My wife took risks in relation to her own health in order to keep our twins safe. My toothbrush, razor and towels were always kept hidden from the twins and there was always an air of anxiety and procedures involving extreme caution were adopted.

24. In or around 2011 I was sat down and spoken to by a new consultant, Dr Gary Benson, who clearly told me that I had to start the Hepatitis C treatment again. He explained that the treatment was now more advanced and that I would not suffer as many side effects. Therefore, in or around 2011, I embarked upon my second course of treatment at the Belfast City Hospital.

25. My second course of treatment was also very difficult but the hospital was more proactive and I received great support from Dr Benson. Unfortunately, I again had to take anti depressants as my depression came back during the treatment. Additionally, my red blood cell count dropped and I had to take time off work again. Tiredness and fatigue were still big problems whilst I was undergoing the second course of treatment.
26. During the second course of treatment, numerous discussions took place regarding whether I should stay on the treatment, but I managed to finish the course in just under a year; following which I was told that I had finally cleared the Hepatitis C.
27. When I was at school and a teenager I was very aware of the stigma associated with HIV and as a result I tried to keep my health a personal matter and was careful in getting involved in any relationships with the opposite sex, as everyone was talking about the AIDS virus and linking Haemophiliacs' into those conversations.
28. When I graduated from university I started to apply for jobs and asked the hospital if I should declare that I was a Haemophiliac to prospective employers, due to the stigma attached to Haemophilia at that time. The hospital advised that I should keep this information to myself and therefore I found the process of applying for jobs even more nerve wracking as I had left something out which I thought that I should have told prospective employers.
29. I was offered jobs in both England and Northern Ireland but I didn't want to be too far from home due to my health issues and subsequent medical problems. I have therefore stayed with the same company in Northern Ireland for 30 years. I was offered more senior roles in the company but they were global roles and I had to decline them as I was aware the Hepatitis C virus limited my mobility within the company. I clearly feel I have missed out on promotions due to my Haemophilia and Hepatitis C.

30. My fatigue levels post my Hepatitis C treatments have impacted upon my ability to work. I become tired after 30 minutes and sometimes I have to pinch myself to stay awake. I am always exhausted. I am not the type of person to complain but I have been constantly reporting fatigue in my routine and non-routine hospital visits over many years.
31. Additionally, I have suffered because when I first met my wife I had to have long difficult discussions with her about my infection and contraception which put excessive strain upon an early and otherwise flourishing relationship. She also had to put her health at risk in order to lead as close to a normal life as possible.
32. I have never been able to obtain critical life insurance and I have therefore paid significantly higher premiums on my mortgage. Therefore, had I not been infected with Hepatitis C, my family and I could have enjoyed a far more affluent lifestyle.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

33. I do not have a private dentist and until relatively recently I have always used the hospital dentist at the Royal School of Dentistry in Belfast, situated on the site of the Royal Victoria Hospital; which was a 150 mile round trip journey but I was advised not to approach a private dentist.
34. There were periods when the hospital didn't provide a dentist although I was never advised as to the reasons why.
35. Whenever I saw the dentist I was always the last on the list in that I had the last appointment of the day. Any instruments which were used in my treatment had to be thoroughly cleaned and it felt like I was in a bomb disposal unit because the dentists were covered in "bomb disposal suit" overalls which included full face masks. I found the whole procedure very embarrassing and it was very scary seeing the dentists like this and I believe that this had a significant impact on my mental health.

36. Furthermore, I was referred to the Gastroenterology Clinic due to my bowel problems. My bloods were taken and I was initially diagnosed with Coeliac Disease. The normal procedure would then be to progress to a biopsy which would usually be a relatively fast and standard procedure. However, because I had Hepatitis C I was made to go into hospital the day before and spend the entire time in complete isolation. I still suffer from significant bowel related issues.

37. I also developed a cyst at the base of my throat which was the size of a golf ball. The consultant advised that he could not remove this until I had been cleared of Hepatitis C so I suffered a delay in respect of the removal of the cyst.

38. I was never offered any type of psychiatric support throughout any of this and I strongly believe that I would have been better equipped to deal with matters if I had been given such support.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

39. In or around the 1990's the hospital told me that I could obtain financial assistance from the Skipton Fund. I received the Stage 1 lump sum payment of £20,000 but I was not entitled to the Stage 2 payment.

40. In my view there are differences in the financial assistance offered to sufferers depending upon where they live in the United Kingdom and I believe that this difference should be rectified.

41. I received a letter in or around 2016/2017 from the Northern Ireland Regional Business Services Organisation, informing me that a new scheme was starting up which would offer support to me. I have, however, received no further information or payments from them and it is very difficult to find out information about the new scheme. It would appear that people in Northern Ireland are not being treated the same as people in the rest of the United



Kingdom. The Skipton Fund and the subsequent organisation that took over are, in my view, not fit for purpose.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

42. I am a member of the Tainted Blood Campaign Group although I have not been particularly vocal given that I wanted to ensure my anonymity for the sake of my children when they were growing up. However, I am now happy to have my name out there fighting for this cause.

43. I have been working with my local MP, Elisha McCallion, regarding a number of issues including the support schemes, but due to the lack of local government it has been difficult to get clear answers and changes from Northern Ireland administration.

44. Both my cousins and brother also had Haemophilia and sadly they have all passed away. One of my cousins died in 1990 when he was in his 30's due to liver disease. My brother died aged 51, in February 2014 and shortly before he passed away he telephoned me because he wanted to discuss some of the symptoms of Hepatitis C & Sarcoidosis. Shortly after this telephone conversation, he died from what the hospital advised was an aggressive form of cancer both in the stomach and in the liver. I am actively involved in ascertaining whether my brother died directly or indirectly as a result of receiving contaminated blood products, which is upsetting enough in itself, but what also concerns me is that my brother, like me, had cleared Hepatitis C so I wonder whether despite clearing the virus there maybe other life threatening illnesses yet to develop. I feel there are many uncertain and unknown medical issues that may yet come to the fore and this alone can cause significant mental stresses.

### **Anonymity, Disclosure and Redaction**

45. I confirm that I do not wish to apply for anonymity and I would like to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated... 21/1/19.....