



Witness Name: Jryna Batters
Statement No. WITN2997001
Exhibits: **WITN2997002-006**
Dated: 16th July 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JRYNA BATTERS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th November 2018.

I, Jryna Batters will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Jryna Batters. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1954. My address is known to the Inquiry. I no longer work due to ill-health but previously I was an occupational therapist working in Inverness. I intend to speak about my contraction of hepatitis C through being infected by my late husband Donald George Batters. My late husband's date of birth was GRO-C, 1951. My husband mainly was a stay at home father looking after our two sons, as I was the main breadwinner. In particular I wish to talk about the nature of Donald's and my illness, how the illness affected us both, the treatment we both received and the impact it had on me and him and our lives together.
2. My late husband Donald and I had been married for 39 years. We

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loved each other very much. I would describe him as my soulmate. Donald received blood plasma on 31st October, 1986 during an operation and contracted hepatitis C. Donald passed his infection onto me and I also contracted hepatitis C. Donald passed away on 8th July, 2019. He died of hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer) and hepatitis C.

Section 2. How Infected

3. Donald and I met through work when we both lived in Cambridge. We went to the Isle of Skye for our honeymoon and both fell in love with the island.

4. In early May 1985 Donald and I were living on the Isle of Skye with our two sons. We were just travelling around Skye camping, staying at different campsites on the island. Donald had gone for a walk around our campsite. He was stood on a rock admiring the view when the rock broke throwing Donald backwards. A ricochet from the rock hit his left thumb. Donald was losing a lot of blood I remember he made a tourniquet around his arm to stop the bleeding. I remember I drove Donald to Portree hospital but the doctor on call at the time said he couldn't treat Donald there and he would have to go to Broadford Hospital in Skye. I drove him there I remember this clearly as I had my two young sons in the rear of the car. Donald was kept in overnight at the hospital. When I rang the following day he had been transferred to Raigmore hospital in Inverness where he had had his left thumb amputated. Donald was later transferred to Woodend Hospital, Aberdeen where he was detained for over a week. I believe he was under the care of Dr Rainer from correspondence I have in my possession. I produce this correspondence in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2997002**.

5. On 31 October, 1986 Donald had an operation to remove one of his toes to be connected to his left hand to replace his thumb this was at

Woodend General Hospital, Aberdeen. His consultant plastic surgeon at the time was Dr Oliver Fenton at Aberdeen Woodend Hospital. I produce in evidence a letter confirming Donald's appointment with Dr Fenton and I refer to it as **WITN2997003**. During the operation there was an unanticipated complication. The surgery took 11 1/2 hours and Donald was given blood plasma. This blood plasma was infected and this is how Donald contracted hepatitis C. I believe Donald was given the blood plasma as a result of shock from such a lengthy operation.

6. Donald was given no information beforehand of the risk of being infected through receiving blood plasma. When he found out that he had contracted hepatitis C through being given infected blood plasma he was very angry and mistrusted the health service after that.

7. I have a rare blood type I am AB rhesus positive. My blood is in high demand and I regularly gave blood at the mobile blood donation unit in Portree. On 19th December, 1994 I received a letter from the blood transfusion service, Inverness. The letter said that my blood had been tested and I had hepatitis C. I produce a copy of this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2997004**. This came as a big shock I didn't even know what hepatitis C was. The letter was from a Dr **GRO-D** **GRO-D** from Raigmore hospital, Inverness. I made an appointment to see Dr **GRO-D** to discuss my infection. I have only vague memories of the meeting with Dr **GRO-D** I remember he kept mentioning that hepatitis C affects the hepatic artery. The doctor did not provide me with any information about the infection. I don't think he knew much about hepatitis C. I remember he gave me a letter to read. I later read the letter and it discussed that I could pass my infection onto others. It advised not to share razors or toothbrushes. He did say that the infection could be passed on through sexual intercourse although it advised that the risks of this was low.

8. Dr **GRO-D** did not give me the impression that hepatitis C was a serious and potentially lethal infection. He offered no explanation as to how I

could have contracted hepatitis C. In early 1995 our local doctor, Dr Crichton from Portree Medical Centre, Portree requested an appointment to see Donald and I. He took blood from Donald to test for hepatitis C.

9. On the 14th February 1995 Donald received a letter from Dr Crichton of the Portree Medical Centre, Portree. The letter stated that Donald had tested positive for hepatitis C. He was referring him to Dr Zentler–Munro who was a consultant Gastroenterologist at Raigmore hospital, Inverness. I produce a copy of this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2997005**. Donald had no idea how he had got the infection. He assumed I had passed the infection on to him as he knew I had hepatitis C. Dr Crichton asked Donald on the bottom of the letter if he had received any blood transfusions during any operations he had had in 1979, 1985, 1987.

10. In late February 1995 Donald and I went to an appointment with Dr Zentler, – Munro at Raigmore hospital, Inverness. We both had liver biopsies. I remember us both recovering on an open ward after our operations. We were in beds side-by-side with a curtain between us. I remember Dr Zentler–Munro approached Donald's bed and I could hear them talking although I couldn't make out what was being said. A short time later Dr Zentler–Munro approached my bed. He was very condescending with an autocratic manner. He started talking about my sexuality and intravenous drugs use. It was clear he thought I had hepatitis C through some nefarious practice. I was utterly disgusted and felt very dirty. I remember on our drive home Donald was very angry about how Dr Zentler-Munro had spoken to him. I remember I was very quiet throughout the journey almost in denial. Dr Zentler-Munro did not give us any information about hepatitis C to help Donald and I understand and manage the infection he assumed we were drug users. As a result of the way he spoke to us it affected the way Donald and I dealt with our infections. We did not tell anyone that we had hepatitis C as we both believed others may think we were drug users

as well.

Section 3. Other infections

11. Donald and I received no other infections other than hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

12. In relation to whether I was tested without my knowledge of consent clearly from the letter sent to me from the blood transfusion service dated 19 December, 1994 my blood was tested for hepatitis C. This was without my knowledge or consent. This is not an issue for me as I believe all blood donated should be tested for any infections before it is given to others. I could have been infected with hepatitis C immediately after my husband was infected following his operation in 1986. I could have had hepatitis C for eight years. In that time I have donated blood many many times and it does concern me that I may have infected others. I do not believe Donald was treated or tested without his knowledge consent. I do not believe that Donald or I were treated or tested for the purpose of research.

Section 5. Impact

13. Donald was always a fit and healthy man. He was infected with hepatitis C in 1986 but did not find out he had it until 1995. Throughout this period he remained a fit and healthy man showing no signs of illness. Donald showed no signs of illness until June 2018.

14. In June, 2018 Donald was at home and he pulled a muscle lifting heavy Jewsons bags which resulted in him getting a hernia. I remember he

started to have terrible diarrhoea that lasted for two weeks. Then he got a massive chest infection and sinusitis. It was a terrible time he just seemed to get one illness after another. He complained of itchy skin. I remember Donald refused to go to the doctors. At this time he had no faith in medical professionals. Eventually however I remember my son Louis and I practically put him in the car and drove him to the doctors. He saw Dr Louise Langston at Portree medical centre. This was on 20th December 2018. She arranged an appointment the following day for Donald to go to Raigmore hospital. Donald was seen by Dr Ali and had tests done including blood taken. Not long after he received an appointment to go and see our local GP, Dr Langston again. I drove Donald there as by this time he was too ill to drive. Dr Langston told Donald he had cancer of the liver caused by the hepatitis C infection. As you can imagine we were both in shock. She told Donald that there was nothing they could do and there was no treatment. I remember Donald asking her how long he had left to live. She replied "maximum one-year but in truth it could be any day". In March, 2019 whilst at home Donald collapsed and started vomiting blood. He was taken by ambulance to Broadford Hospital where he was detained overnight. He came home to palliative care and we both knew it was just a waiting game.

15. Donald passed away in the early hours of Monday, 8th July, 2019.

16. At the end of February 1995 our local doctor Dr Crichton asked us to go and see him regarding a treatment that was available for hepatitis C. At the appointment our doctor told us that it was a course of treatment and we would have to self-inject ourselves in the stomach. The treatment was called interferon. I believe the course was to run over six months but Donald and I only managed to take the treatment for a month. Donald and I collected our treatment at a local chemist in Portree. Donald and I would inject ourselves everyday with interferon. Donald suffered no adverse reaction to the treatment physically or mentally that I recall. For me, the side-effects of the treatment were

horrific. Physically I was exhausted all the time but I couldn't sleep I remember I developed bruises all down my legs. It wasn't from the injections because I was injecting into my stomach. Mentally I became psychotic and extremely paranoid. I was going into work but I couldn't focus and was making mistakes. I couldn't concentrate at all. I became severely depressed and suicidal. Due to the terrible mental side effects on me Donald and I decided to stop the treatment after one month. Even when I stopped the treatment I remained severely depressed my mental health did not improve.

17. I remember on one occasion in October 1995 when I was driving my car through Portree. I wanted to kill myself and I decided to just drive off the road and end it all. Something stopped me from doing it, thoughts of my family I assume, I drove straight home and broke down in front of Donald. All I wanted to do was stay in bed all day. I just shut down. I was having totally irrational thoughts. I remember another occasion the following month in November 1995 when I grabbed an axe from my home and went outside and sat in my car. I had this notion that someone was going to come and steal the tyres on my car. I remember it was around midnight and both my boys were still up. Louis would have been around 13 years of age and Bede around 10 years of age. I sat in the car for a long time thinking someone was coming. My erratic behaviour must have frightened my boys. Eventually I could no longer go to work. I was making too many mistakes and had started getting complaints made against me.

18. On 21 March 2019 I was offered as a treatment for the hepatitis C. This is a 16 week course of a tablet called Mavyret. I was reluctant at first due to the horrific side-effects of the previous treatment. Watching my husband deteriorate and receive palliative care made me decide to try it. I am currently still on the treatment and hopeful of a successful outcome.

19. My infected status did not impact upon any treatment, medical or

dental care or any other conditions.

20. Donald and I were very private people. We live in a remote part of the Isle of Skye and keep ourselves very much to ourselves. Both are sons were home-schooled by Donald. We were aware that there is a stigma attached to hepatitis C. It is associated with AIDS, drug use and, sexuality. Due to this stigma Donald and I did not tell anyone we had hepatitis C. Donald was very close to his brother but he didn't even tell him. His brother only recently found out what caused his brother's death. Donald and I didn't even tell our sons.

21. Donald was a stay at home father. He did do odd jobs in relation to computer work. He also did gardening and landscaping on occasions. Having hepatitis C did not affect his employment until June 2018 when he became too ill to do odd jobs for people any more. The side-effects of the interferon cost me my job. I was the main breadwinner for the family and therefore the financial consequences for our family were disastrous. I took early retirement on 18th December, 1996 at the time I was earning over £20,000 a year. If I had remained in my job I would have trebled that amount. I left with a pension of £500 per month. That was our total household income. We struggled financially but did not apply for benefits. Donald and I were too private and proud to ask for handouts even though I'm sure we would have been entitled.

22. Through no fault of our own my family has been devastated by the death of Donald. Both my sons were extremely close to their dad and will spend the rest of their lives without him. Donald was their main carer as I was always working. They were home-schooled by Donald and as such he was with them both almost 24/7. Even though they are now adults their bond was very strong. I know they are both utterly devastated by their father's death but they are trying to put a brave face on things and be strong for my sake. As for me, I have lost the love of my life. Our plans to grow old together in the home that we both loved and Donald built has been cruelly taken away. I currently still have this

hideous infection that cost the life of the only man I have ever loved.

Section 6. Treatment, care, support

23. Donald and I dealt with our hepatitis C very inwardly. We were not offered any counselling or psychological support. I do not think Donald would have taken any support if it had been offered. He was very mistrustful of the health service after he found out he had been infected. I do believe I would have benefited from counselling and psychological support particularly when my mental health deteriorated when I started taking the interferon.

Section 7. Financial assistance

24. In December 2018 when we knew there was nothing more that could be done for Donald I decided to seek legal advice. I have a friend whose son is a lawyer in Skye. His son made some enquiries on my behalf and gave me a website address. I contacted the Scottish Infected Blood Scheme and they sent Donald and I some forms to fill in. I produce in evidence a copy of the application form that Donald filled in. I identify it as **WITN2997006**.

25. On 15 May, 2019 Donald received a lump sum of £70,000. I also on the same date received a lump sum of £50,000. Both of these payments were from the Scottish government. Donald was awarded a monthly payment of £2250 and I was awarded £1575. Sadly, Donald only received one payment in June before his death in July.

26. The process of applying for financial assistance was fairly straight forward. Donald and I simply filled in the forms and sent them back. I believe our doctor, Dr Langston sent a letter to Mo Kerr, RGN, RMN, NMP lead advanced nurse for viral hepatitis at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. Mo Kerr and the consultant gastroenterologist filled in the

medical aspect of the claim and sent it off to the Scottish Blood Infected Scheme.

27. The only view I have about the financial assistance is that it was too little and too late for Donald. No amount of money will ever compensate me for his death.

Section 8. Other issues

28. I do not wish to remain anonymous in this Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

12/08/2019