

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

A summary of Inquiry hearings from Edinburgh

This week's hearings in Edinburgh have featured a high number of anonymous witnesses, a reminder of how many people affected continue to live with secrecy and lies. Each voice is so valuable, whether it's televised or told only to those in the Inquiry room. We thank every witness for their bravery in taking part.

We heard from Christine Norval, wife of Bruce—well known to most of us for his campaigning and relentless fight for justice. Christine spoke of the impact of Bruce's ill health and campaigning work on her family and how she looked forward to a quiet life when that battle would one day be won.

The Inquiry heard witness after witness de-

scribe their attempts to get medical records—many of which had gone missing or had been destroyed. Others were incomplete and, they believed, factually inaccurate. One witness told the Inquiry that despite a clear memory of events and a supporting letter from his GP, his application to The Skipton Fund was dismissed because his medical records had been destroyed and he was unable to prove the source of his Hep C infection.

The Inquiry heard the heartbreak of a husband whose wife was given kidney from a donor who had received contaminated blood. She died of HIV aged 33. He said: "She went into hospital for life saving treatment and came

out with a death sentence."

A number of witnesses described the appalling psychological impact of their infections or of dealing with the infections of a loved one. A significant proportion said they had suicidal thoughts. One witness described how his dad saved his life by talking him down from his bedroom windowsill during a course of interferon and ribavirin treatment.

Concluding, Sir Brian thanked all the witnesses for their "dignity, courage and resilience". He urged more witnesses to come forward, saying: "One pebble does not make a beach, lots of pebbles do. A statement may be a pebble or a rock, but all of them have value."

Quotes of the week

"If people not used to speaking are heard by people not used to listening, then real changes can take place."

Mr X, who was infected with Hep C, on his hopes for the Inquiry.

"I felt it was the beginning of the end of my life. I felt I had just been given a death sentence. I was only 15, I didn't really know what to do with it."

Graeme Malloch, who has severe haemophilia A, on being diagnosed with Hep C.

"If tears were made of ink I could write a book about the wonderful person who was so cruelly taken away from me all those years ago."

Mr W, whose wife was infected with HIV after receiving a kidney from a donor infected as a result of contaminated blood. She died aged 33.

"We're looking at something that happened so many years ago. There have been so many opportunities that the state could have taken to reduce the harm this has done. We don't want pats on the head, we don't want sympathy. We want truth and justice."

Christine Norval on the impact on her family of her husband Bruce's infection with Hep C and subsequent campaign for justice.

"I'm here to give him back the self-respect and dignity that was stripped from him."

Mrs Y on her husband who was infected with Hep C, became an alcoholic and died aged 45.

Inquiry news

The Infected Blood Inquiry will now take a week's break before moving to the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff from Tuesday 23 July—Friday 26 July. The Haemophilia Society will be holding an informal social gathering after the first day's hearing on 23 July. We hope you can join us in the bar area of the Hilton Hotel Cardiff, Kingsway, Greyfriars Road CF10 3HH after the hearings finish, usually about 3.30pm. Everyone is welcome, even if you are not planning to attend the Inquiry itself. We hope it will give us the chance to reflect on the day and offer each other support and companionship. Please just turn up or, if you know you'll be coming, let us know by emailing: publicinquiry@haemophilia.org.uk.