

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

A summary of Inquiry hearings from London

After a break of more than two months, the re-starting of personal witness testimonies this week has been extremely emotional.

The courage of all witnesses has once again shone a light on the pain and suffering many continue to bear as a result of the contaminated blood scandal.

Denise and Colin Turton spoke of their "happy, bright" son Lee, who died aged 10 from HIV in 1992. Their testimony finished with a moving video of Lee's last Christmas. They told of the stigma of Lee's HIV and of how they were shunned by parents at his school. One teacher even refused to teach their son. As a result the couple moved home

and withdrew, unwilling to make new friends.

Sue Threakall told the Inquiry her late husband Bob was as "honest and honourable as it is possible to be". His diagnosis of HIV in 1985, four years after the couple married, marked the start of a joint campaign to raise awareness and get justice for victims which Sue has continued ever since.

Trevor and Louise Marsden described the huge impact of his hepatitis C infection and subsequent severe depression on their family. Louise described how her daughters had to take time off school to care for Trevor and how they were all sworn to secrecy over his haemophilia and hepatitis.

She told the Inquiry that her "pipe dream" was to put anyone who had treated her husband into the DeLorean car from the film 'Back to the Future'. She said: "I'd like them to roll up their sleeves and say 'you're having what he's having' and see if they'd be happy with that."

Paul, who was diagnosed with HIV aged 21, told the Inquiry of the loneliness of keeping his condition secret and how is resulting anger fuelled his questions and campaigning. Concluding his evidence, he told Inquiry chair, Sir Brian Langstaff: "All that anger that brewed inside me went out the window when this Inquiry was announced. I have full faith in the Inquiry."

Inquiry news

Giving evidence to the Inquiry is a daunting task for everybody, but one witness this week revealed he'd overcome severe psychological problems in order to attend. Mr AI said the shock of being diagnosed with HIV in his teens led to a mental breakdown which resulted in him becoming a recluse. He pushed away friends because he felt he'd become a "burden" to them, and spent many years living in his bedroom. Mr AI said without the help of a specialist social worker and community nurse, he may never have mastered the life skills or gained the confidence to emerge from his "safe zone". Yet with the support of his wife, he took on the "huge, stressful task" of giving evidence so that his voice, and that of his close relative who died of HIV aged 12, could be heard. Thank you to everyone who has had the courage, strength and support to speak out this week.

Quotes of the week

"The personal effect of secrets and lies has been deeply upsetting and still haunts me. I absolutely know the truth will enable me to finally make sense of that time and - hopefully - I won't feel the darkness which hangs over a huge chunk of my life."

Baroness Jane Campbell whose husband Graham died of HIV in 1993.

"The real pain comes the year after, when the numbness wears off. The pain's increasing...the nights seem to be so long and it's getting darker. Life does go on but in a totally different way."

Barry Fitzgerald on the loss of his wife Jane from hepatitis C

"We only want to hear one thing and that's the truth. We want to know why human life was downgraded ahead of scientific research and making money and why the victims you created have since been treated as second class citizens."

Sue Threakall, whose husband Bob died of HIV aged 47 in 1991.

"The pain of reliving what happened to Lee is nothing compared to the pain and suffering he had in his short life. We listen to MPs shouting about fearing for their safety. Haemophiliacs were fearing for their lives and the safety of factor VIII they were using. The Government knew the factor VIII being used was infected, as did the pharmaceutical companies, and did nothing."

Denise Turton, whose son Lee died aged 10 of HIV in 1992