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The Penrose Inquiry

Witness statement of David Brian Lorimer McClelland

**Draft Witness statement in relation to topic B5 - Meeting of haemophilia patients in
Edinburgh 19th December 1984**

In response to the questions raised, I have to state that at the time of writing this statement, I have seen no documents that relate to this meeting apart from a single cutting from the Edinburgh Evening News marked "21.12.84", nor have I retained diaries or notebooks for that period. My responses are therefore restricted to what little I can recall of the occasion.

1 What was the purpose of the meeting?

I know that the meeting was called as a result of the discovery of HTLVIII infection in some patients with haemophilia who had been treated in Edinburgh and were believed to have contracted the infection from factor VIII made by SNBTS. There was clearly an urgent need to inform patients that this had occurred and to offer an opportunity for initial questions to be addressed quickly. I think it was felt that it was correct to try to inform as many patients as possible at the same time and in a direct, face to face situation. I do not know if there were other reasons for choosing a meeting to communicate with the patients, such as difficulty in arranging clinic appointments for all the patients during a short period of time.

2 Why was I at the meeting?

I had worked with Dr Ludlam to identify the batches of factor VIII that may have caused the infection in these patients, and I considered it part of my job as SNBTS Regional Transfusion Director to share the responsibility of informing the patients, to explain what the SNBTS was doing to minimise the risk and to answer any questions that might arise related to the role of the SNBTS as the producer of factor VIII that these patients had received.

3 Why was there representation from Glasgow (Professor Forbes?)

I do not even recall his presence at the meeting. I have no recollection as to why Professor Forbes was present.

4 Do any Records of the meeting exist?

I have never seen any records of this meeting. I do not know if, or where, such records might exist.

5 What was decided before the meeting about what information was to be given to patients? Who was involved in deciding?

I have no recollection of what was discussed and decided before we met the patients. I think it is almost certain that Dr Ludlam and I would have discussed the information we hoped to communicate. I do not recall being a party to discussions with anyone else about the approach to be taken.

6 Who was advised about the meeting, how was the date etc communicated, how many patients were advised?

I have no recollection of how patients were informed of the forthcoming meeting. It would have been the task of the haemophilia clinicians to organise this, rather than the SEBTS, as the clinicians had all the patients' details and SEBTS held none of this information.

7 Description of the meeting

The meeting was, I believe, called by Dr Christopher Ludlam. It took place in the late afternoon or very early evening (it was dark outside). I recall quite clearly that it was held in the large surgical lecture theatre in the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, which would have seated about 200. My recollection is that the lecture theatre was quite well filled. I do not recall the presence of either Dr Charles Forbes (who I know) or Geraldine Brown (who I do not recall having ever met). Dr Ludlam spoke before I did, although the Evening News article referred to below refers only to statements made by myself. I have no recollection if anyone other than Dr Ludlam and I spoke to the patients. I have some recollection that some patients asked questions and I am sure that we would have answered them as fully as we could, given the limited information available at that time.

8 Were patients informed that they had been tested for HTLV III and that some had positive results? Was additional information provided about who had and had not been tested?

From the attached Evening News article dated 2 days after the meeting (21st December) and referring directly to the meeting, it seems clear that information was given that 15 patients had positive tests (“antibodies to the virus”). I am quoted as saying “the 15 people were discovered as a result of routine testing of those most vulnerable because of their reliance on frequent transfusions.” However, I have no recollection of whether or not more was said about who had and who had not been tested. I think it would have been difficult to do this without risk of breaching confidentiality.

9 What information was given about treatment ...risks...testing...significance of positive test...fatal consequences of infection..?

I do not recall if there was any discussion about the relative risks of commercial and indigenous factor VIII. Since it was believed that the infected patients in Edinburgh had received only SNBTS factor VIII, it is possible that commercial Factor VIII may not have been mentioned. From the Evening News account, it appears that I informed the patients that a positive result in the HTLV III antibody test did not necessarily mean that AIDS would follow. I think this was consistent with the understanding of the interpretation of the early HIV antibody tests at that time. I do not recall what if anything was said about the prognosis for those with a positive HTLVIII antibody test.

10 What was patients’ response...Questions asked...Information given...relative safety of products.

I cannot recall what questions were asked, or what responses were given. The Evening News report implies that it was suggested that the chance of contracting AIDS from “blood transfusion” was remote, especially in Scotland “which is virtually self sufficient in blood” (The distinction between blood and plasma derivatives was poorly presented in many media reports at that time. It was usual for news reports to refer to factor VIII treatment as “blood transfusion”. Television reports about factor VIII were often illustrated with images of blood bags rather than vials of Factor VIII concentrate).

11 How did I become aware that patients had probably been infected by SNBTS factor VIII?

On 26 October 1984, Dr Christopher Ludlam informed me verbally that some Edinburgh patients, who were believed to have been treated exclusively with SNBTS Factor VIII, had been tested for HIV antibody by a research laboratory in London and found to be positive. The subsequent investigations and preventive actions are described in the SNBTS paper, Actions Surrounding FVIII Batch 023110090 (NY3-009), already submitted to the Inquiry.

Statement of Dr David Brian Lorimer McClelland

April 21st 2011

Attached:

“Plea to donors in AIDS alert”: Edinburgh Evening News, December 21st 1984