

Witness Name: Roseleen Kennedy

Statement No: 1

Inquiry Reference No: PI204MF

## **THE PENROSE INQUIRY**

### **Witness Statement of Roseleen Kennedy**

I, Roseleen Kennedy, say as follows:-

1. I am 45 years of age having been born on 3 September 1965. I am employed as a teacher. My mother was Eileen O'Hara who was born on 9 October 1930 and died on 7 May 2003. The certified cause of death was Hepatic failure. I have three siblings.

2. The first surgery I remember her having was a hysterectomy at Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow in 1980. I do not know the name of the consultant who performed the surgery and I do not know whether my mother required a blood transfusion. The surgery was unremarkable and my mother made a good recovery.

3. From approximately 1980 to 1990 my mother was employed as an orderly at Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow on a part-time basis. She worked between 5pm and 10pm, on certain days of the week.

4. My mother had heart surgery in 1985 at the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow. I am not aware who the surgeon was, but I know that her Cardiac Consultant was Dr Dunn. The surgery was a heart valve replacement and my mother was given a mitral valve from a pig. To my knowledge there were no complications with the surgery and I do not know if my mother was given blood or blood products during or after this surgery. She was in hospital for a short period (a week or so) and discharged home where she made a good recovery. I wasn't actually aware of my mother being in poor health prior to the surgery.

5. Soon after my mother gave up work she became unwell (approximately 1990) and breathless and tired. I don't think, however, that she gave up work due to poor health. She went to her GP Dr Davda at Springburn Health Centre, Glasgow who carried out some blood tests. My mother continued going to the GP for several months. Each time she had been to the GP she would say, "She keeps asking me if I'm drinking". My mother very rarely drank alcohol, only a small glass of wine on very special occasions, which she never finished. Each time my mother attended the GP she was asked the same thing. She was getting upset as she felt she was being treated like an alcoholic. The GP told her that there were problems with her liver function tests.

6. Her GP referred her back to the Royal Infirmary. I think this was to see the heart surgeon who had performed her mitral valve operation. I think this would have been in 1990 or 1991. My mother always went on her own to hospital appointments so I do not know what happened. My father was in poor health at this time and did not accompany her. My mother was back and forward to the outpatient clinic and then she told us that she needed another heart valve. She was also suffering from diarrhoea around this time (as well as general bowel problems) and was also referred to a gastroenterologist, but as far as I know she only attended the gastroenterologist on the one occasion. She told me that she was going to see the gastroenterologist about the diarrhoea. She had this for about two or three months and then it stopped.

7. My mother was due to be admitted to hospital for heart surgery in July 1991, but she put this off as I was getting married in October. She ended up going in two days after my wedding which would have been 14 October 1991 and had the mitral valve replaced with a metal one. There were no complications during surgery and she made a good recovery. On this occasion though she was in Intensive Care and my sister Annette McDonald recalls clearly that my mother was given a blood transfusion.

8. My mother appeared to keep well following this surgery. I gave birth to my daughter in 1992, and my mother looked after her from when I returned to

work until June 1995. My mother had to stop looking after my daughter at this time as she (mother) wasn't keeping well. She had fluid retention in her legs and her abdomen also appeared swollen. She was pale looking and she was very tired and had to have a sleep in the afternoon. She also felt nauseated and started to lose her appetite. She did not look jaundiced. She went to see her GP who was then Dr Millburn of Springburn Health Centre, Glasgow. I am not sure if the GP carried out blood tests, but she was referred to Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow for an ultrasound scan. After the scan, Dr Millburn informed her that one of the issues they wanted to check was lymphoma and that they wanted to do further tests because they thought there were nodes around her liver.

9. She was referred to a gastroenterologist whose name was possibly Dr Fraser – in any event his name started with an F. She was admitted to Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow in approximately July 1995 for a liver biopsy and bone marrow test for lymphoma. She was in hospital for about a week as she was on Warfarin at this time due to her heart condition. She was told that her bone marrow was okay but that she had cirrhosis of the liver. My sister Annette was working in Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow as a nurse at this time and she asked to speak to my mother's doctor. We cannot recall the name of the doctor. The doctor told my sister that as well as the cirrhosis of the liver my mother had Hepatitis C. My sister asked the doctor if the Hepatitis C had caused cirrhosis of the liver and the doctor said that it was a possibility and that she had probably got the Hepatitis C from a blood transfusion. My sister was present when the doctor told my mother that she had Hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver. The doctor played down the Hepatitis C and gave the impression that it was a common infection. My mother was not advised by the doctor to be careful about passing on the virus and not warned at all about secondary infection even though she was on Warfarin for her blood which made her more at risk from bleeding. She was not offered any support or further information, not even a leaflet. As family members no one ever made contact to suggest that we should be tested for Hepatitis C, not even my father or my sister Annette McDonald who lived with my parents at that time. It was not until after my mother's death that I approached my own GP to ask

for a Hepatitis C test. At no point were we made aware of any services or support for families.

10. My mother asked about possible treatment for Hepatitis C at every medical appointment she attended. Every time my mother asked about treatment she was told that there was no treatment they could offer her as she already had cirrhosis of the liver. She also always asked about where she got Hepatitis C from and doctors started saying that it was likely that she got it from a blood transfusion in 1985. She was told that blood had been taken from American prisoners and this may have been a source of Hepatitis C.

11. The doctor my sister Annette had initially spoken to suggested that she phone the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service which she did. A female doctor from the SNBTS told her that there was nothing they could do as my mother had been given the blood in good faith. She also said that because my mother had cirrhosis of the liver there was no treatment that would be effective. This call probably took place in 1995.

12. My mother always coped well with ill health and always did as the doctors said and advised, but she found having Hepatitis C very difficult. My mother hated having "Hep C risk" stamped on the front of her medical notes and she was embarrassed about it. She knew that Hepatitis C was an infection which was generally associated with drug addicts. Having worked in Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow she knew a lot of people who were working there and was worried that people she knew might find out about her Hepatitis C status. She felt this should have been inside her medical notes and not on the front so that people who weren't caring for her could not see.

13. The only clinics which my mother attended were the Warfarin Clinic (she had been on Warfarin from the second heart operation), the Diabetic Clinic (she had been insulin dependent for a number of years prior to her death) and Dr Dunn's yearly cardiac clinic yearly. She was never referred to any specialist in relation to her Hepatitis C and was not referred to a liver consultant. She also attended her GP when she wasn't feeling well. Even

though she was injecting herself with insulin twice daily, she was never given any type of special bin or special uplift for needle disposal. It was ultimately my sister Annette (and not the NHS) who warned the family not to use the same nail clippers, tweezers, pierced earrings, etc as my mother due to the risk of Hepatitis C transmission

14. I would say from the time my mother was told she had Hepatitis C until she died she asked every medical person she saw about treatment for the Hepatitis C and she was always told she wasn't suitable for treatment.

15. From 1995 onwards my mother's symptoms worsened. She was tired, weak, had a very pale pallor and a thin face. She also has symptoms of fluid retention and oedema in her legs and around her waist. She always dressed well and hated having to buy elasticated trousers and skirts to fit around her abdomen. She just slowly deteriorated. This said, she was never depressed and still managed to walk around the town, although she was unable to carry things.

16. My sister Annette left home in May 2001 and my father was diagnosed with cancer in February 2002. My father passed away in November 2002. My mother was looking after my father with family support. Another sister came back from England for the last three months of my father's life to help out. Following my father's death we never left my mother alone.

17. My brother was getting married in April 2003 and my mother was planning on going to the hen night in March. However in March she became very unwell. She had abdominal pain and was vomiting. Her GP carried out some tests and informed her that she had pancreatitis. She was admitted to Stobhill Hospital, Glasgow two days later and investigations were carried out as she was thought to have gallstones which were blocking the bile duct. A tube was put down her throat in an attempt to remove the stones but this was unsuccessful. When we arrived that evening for visiting we were very surprised and upset to see my mother being taken from the ward to the High Dependency Unit. Her temperature had risen so high that it was causing

great concern. I was later told that during this procedure an area near the bile duct had been “nicked” by a surgical instrument causing infection and her temperature to rise. Her liver then failed. She was moved to the High Dependency Unit. After a week or so she had recovered enough to be moved back to the ward. She even managed to get out for a few hours to attend my brother’s wedding. However, a few days after this we arrived for visiting to once again find my mother very unwell. Her condition had deteriorated and she went into organ failure and never recovered. She was transferred to coronary care as it was felt the cardiologists should take over her care due to her past heart surgery. She died on 7 May 2003. Ironically the cardiologist said at this time that her heart valve was working fine, it was her liver that was the main problem. I cannot recall the name of the doctor whose care she was under at this time.

18. When I went to collect the death certificate I asked the nurse why only “Hepatic failure” and not Hepatitis C was on the death certificate. She told me that that the doctor who had completed the death certificate wasn’t available.

19. Although my mother was regarded as a Hepatitis C risk, few precautions seemed to have been taken as regards cross-contamination. My mother ended up lying in a hospital bed or sitting in a chair with her legs leaking fluid containing blood onto a blanket and incontinence pads. She was warning us not to touch the blanket. There was no attempt to alert visitors or other health service workers to the risks of cross-contamination and ultimately my sister Annette had to explain to the nurses that it wasn’t safe.

20. We do not qualify for the Skipton Fund payments as my mother died in May 2003 and only those who died after August 2003 are eligible which I feel does not recognise the suffering she endured and penalises her for being too poorly to survive.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed .....

Date .....