

1. BACKGROUND

Please describe your connection to this case.

My name is Janet Conners. I live at 15 Sarah Crescent, Hatchet Lake, Nova Scotia. My date of birth is January 4, 1956.

I am the widow of a hemophiliac. My late husband, Randy Conners was a Factor VIII hemophiliac and became infected with HIV from blood products and I became infected with HIV through sexual relations with my husband. I am one of hundreds of secondarily infected spouses and children with HIV, from blood in Canada.

Randy used blood products, for the most part to prevent bleeding and to prevent a worsening of arthritis. Randy never had a life threatening bleed.

Randy was diagnosed with HIV in 1986. I was diagnosed with HIV in July 1989. We disclosed our HIV status to our son in 1991, when he was just 11 years old. I was diagnosed with AIDS in July 1994. Randy died of AIDS related complications September 13, 1994.

Randy, with a group of other HIV positive hemophiliacs founded a national organization named Canadian Hemophiliacs with HIV. They wanted the ability to be represented and to speak for themselves publicly and at the Krever Inquiry into Canada's Blood system.

I founded a national organization for those who were secondarily infected with HIV, named (Janet Conners) Infected and Spouses Association. We are an ad hoc group comprised of mainly women and children. I believed it was necessary to start this group because it seemed to me that we were the forgotten, ignored and neglected group of persons infected with HIV by Canada's Blood System. I believed we needed our own council and the ability to speak for ourselves publicly and at the Krever Inquiry into Canada's blood system. Our roles in and our needs from the blood community were and are vastly different from those directly infected with HIV.

The secondarily infected group is comprised mostly of women and children. We were infected with HIV, and often the primary caregiver for our HIV infected husbands/partners and our HIV infected children. Women were viewed as having one of two roles, caregivers or vectors of HIV. We cared for our sick and dying husbands/partners and we passed the disease on to our children. It has been recognized, in Nova Scotia, for example, that we, the partners and children, were equally harmed by the actions or inactions of the Canadian Red Cross, as operator of Canada's Blood System.

One of the first facts known about HIV is that it was transmitted sexually. This was learned through scientific study of HIV transmission in the gay community. There has never been a sexually transmitted disease that was known to be transmitted homosexually that was not transmitted heterosexually.

The Canadian Red Cross Society knew HIV was also transmitted by blood; that HIV caused AIDS and that AIDS caused people's death – it is a 100% fatal disease. The blood product Randy used was made from 60,000 to 200,000 blood donations per vial. Heat treating the blood product would have killed the HI virus. The Canadian Red Cross Society knowingly depleted its stocks of non heat treated product. They had a stockpile of safer heat treated products on their shelves. It did this without telling hemophiliacs or their partners.

Without our knowing the Canadian Red Cross Society was distributing a product that would kill us, Randy and I continued a usual sexual relationship. I became infected with HIV. I will die from the effects of this disease

The Canadian Red Cross Society failed to advise Randy and I and other recipients of blood and/or blood products of these facts. The Canadian Red Cross Society failed to warn the sexual partners of these facts. Randy and I and other recipients and their sexual partners were denied the ability to protect ourselves from infecting or becoming infected with HIV, through sexual activity. Couples were denied the ability to make informed choices about having children who would be born without HIV infection. Partners and children of recipients became infected with HIV. Many of those partners and children have already died. We, the surviving infected partners and children, have a disease that is fatal. None of us received blood or blood products; “adulterated drug”, however we will all die as a result of that adulterated drug and the Canadian Red Cross Society's failure to warn.

2. EMOTIONAL LOSS

Please describe how the offence affected you emotionally.

Randy was a son of Dorothy and Percy, a husband to me, a father to Gus, a brother to Judy, Larry and Kim, a son in law, a brother in law, an uncle, a cousin, a nephew, a grandson, a friend, a coworker. Randy had a wonderful sense of humor and loved to make others laugh. He was a marvelous storyteller. Family was the most important thing in Randy's life. He loved computers, computer games, Star Trek, music, traveling, fishing, good food, friends, he especially loved Christmas and its usual traditions and he loved continuing his family traditions and sharing them with Gus and me. Randy loved Gus so much that he adopted him after he and I married. He was a fabulous father to Gus and took his role a father very seriously. I have never met anyone who loved life, loved being alive and was so alive as Randy. We all miss him very, very much. My son and I speak of him nearly every day. I don't think our son will ever fully recover from the death of his father. Gus was just 14 years old when Randy died.

I am the daughter of Don and Irene Pritchard, the widow of Randy, wife of Terry, mother to Gus, a stepmother, a sister to Ross, Lois, Norma, Don, and Ruth, an aunt, a sister in law, a daughter in law, a niece, a friend, an activist. I enjoy travel, I love my family and the time I spend with them. I love Christmas, and parties and my friends. I love to garden.

Randy and I met in December, 1985. We married in August, 1987 and lived in Halifax until we bought a house in Dartmouth. We were very happy. We had a fairly ordinary life, with the same plans, hopes and dreams as others of our age.

I don't believe I have the words to describe how the offence has affected me emotionally. I would like to share some stories of Randy's and my life and hope these stories can help the court to understand how the offence affected me emotionally. If Randy and I had not been infected with HIV, none of these things would have happened.

Randy had previously tested positive for Hepatitis B and that hadn't seemed to have any impact on his health. We believed HIV was just one more harmless thing in the blood that Randy had been infected with. He was being treated at both the Hemophilia and Infectious Diseases Clinics in Halifax.

There were two events that occurred closely to each other which forced us to come to terms with the seriousness of his HIV infection. The first was when I tested positive for HIV and the second was while Randy was completing the application form for Federal Compensation.

Randy and I had been told, separately and together, that there was very little chance that I would become infected with HIV. Randy was told that hemophiliacs did not seem to be infecting their wives, so he should use condoms only if he wanted to. I was told that, after nearly 3 years of being tested on a quarterly basis, I was probably immune to HIV infection. We were told that it was believed that "something" happened to the virus when

