



NATIONAL CITIZENS INQUIRY

Truro, NS

Day 1

March 16, 2023

EVIDENCE

Witness 8: Leigh-Anne Coolen

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[00:00:00]

Ches Crosbie

The next witness is Leigh-Anne Coolen. Leigh-Anne, do you affirm solemnly to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes, I do.

Gayle Karding

Good afternoon, Ms. Coolen.

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Hi.

Gayle Karding

Can you tell us where you're from?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I'm originally from Newfoundland. I live now in Head of Jeddore.

Gayle Karding

Head of Jeddore, Nova Scotia?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes.

Gayle Karding

I understand that you did take one dose of the vaccine?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes.

Gayle Karding

And when did you do that?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

On May 27th, 2021.

Gayle Karding

Did you do that of your own accord?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

No.

Gayle Karding

And can you elaborate on that?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

My employer started, I guess, maybe March or April, with a real push for everyone to get vaccinated. I held off until I couldn't any longer, and I had to go get my first shot. They expected two, but they got one.

Gayle Karding

Okay. What were your reasons for hesitating?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Because it was too soon. Everything was just, "Oh, here's a vaccine. It'll help." I didn't trust that it would help. I'm not an anti-vaxxer by any means. I'm fully vaccinated. My son is fully vaccinated. My husband is vaccinated. I'm not against vaccines. I was just against this because I didn't trust it.

Gayle Karding

When you say that family members in your household are fully vaccinated, you mean the kind of traditional vaccines, that sort of thing?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes. Exactly, yes.

Gayle Karding

Okay. You started to feel some pressure in March and April from your employer.

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes.

Gayle Karding

Did your employer have a mandate in place?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

They did mandate it. I'm not sure if they had a written mandate. I'm sure it's probably in the company policy in some way shape or form. I do have emails from the president, kind of telling everybody to go get vaccinated; remember, get your vaccination; send in your verification kind of thing when you're done, so we can have that on file.

Gayle Karding

Were you ever told what would happen if you did not get vaccinated?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

We were told that we wouldn't be able to work there anymore.

Gayle Karding

Okay. So in May of 2021 you did receive your first injection. Do you know which one you got?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

It was Pfizer.

Gayle Karding

Pfizer, okay. And do you know where you got that and who administered it?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I don't know who administered it, but I do I know where I got it. It was at the pharmacy in the Superstore on Cole Harbor Road.

Gayle Karding

In the pharmacy. And do you have the lot number for that?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I do, but I don't have it with me. I know I filled it out on something, but I—

Gayle Karding

Alright, so you got one injection of Pfizer in May of 2021. And tell us what happened after that.

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Everything seemed normal until Sunday, June 20th, when I don't remember much. I remember waking up in the morning and hearing my husband talking to, I assume, somebody on the phone. Because it was only him and I in the room.

It was the paramedics. I had had a stroke. The ambulance came and, the next thing I knew, I had paramedics at the foot of my bed. They took me to the hospital, and I was there for five days.

Gayle Karding

Has your husband described that experience to you?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

He has. Not in great detail, because he's still traumatized from the event. I make noises in my sleep. He wakes up immediately thinking, "what's going on here?" So yeah, he still lives with it.

Gayle Karding

And what did he tell you about the experience?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I don't even know how to put it into words. He said my face was kind of twisted, obviously. Because I had a droop on one side of my face. I was trying to say words. He couldn't understand anything. I wasn't there, so I don't know, but he doesn't really elaborate on it because he doesn't talk about things like that.

Gayle Karding

Okay. The five days that you were in the hospital, can you describe how you were feeling, some of the symptoms you were having?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I don't remember any symptoms at all, really. It kind of just happened, and it went away. I'm left with memory loss, or I don't know what to call it. I can't get my thoughts organized as quickly as I used to be able to. But I went through several tests in the hospital, several CAT scans, everything. I had blood work done, I think, twice a day.

[00:05:00]

I had an IV with a heparin drip because of the blood clots. The blood clots were in my arteries, not in my veins. I do have Factor V Leiden, but it is actually in my report from the hospital that they don't believe that was the cause of the stroke. Eith all the other tests that

I had done, nobody gave me a reason as to why this happened. So I'm still left wondering why.

Gayle Karding

Okay. When you were in the hospital, was there any discussion about whether you'd had your vaccine and when?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

No. Before I got out of the ambulance, they gave me a COVID test, because I wasn't allowed in the hospital without one. I did mention to them at that point that I had just had my vaccine about three weeks ago. And nobody said anything. A couple of days later, I believe, when I was in the room and there were medical teams visiting, I had mentioned that I had had my vaccine about three weeks ago. And nobody paid any attention to those words coming out of my mouth. They kind of just turned around and walked away, and nobody said anything about it.

Gayle Karding

So during the entire time that you were in the hospital, no doctor or medical professional asked you any questions about the proximity of your stroke to your vaccine injection?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

None.

Gayle Karding

How old are you?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Now I'm 42.

Gayle Karding

And at the time?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Forty-one.

Gayle Karding

Forty-one years old. Is there any history of stroke in your family?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

There is. My grandmother, I believe she was in her 50s when she had a stroke. I think she also has—or had—factor 5 Leiden. She had blood clotting: I believe she had a blood clot in her leg. She did have a pulmonary embolism, a stroke. She had an aneurysm that was

clipped. It didn't leak or anything, so they settled that. But she had the typical Factor V Leiden things happening.

Gayle Karding

Okay. Do you know whether her stroke was consistent with that condition?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I can't say one way or the other.

Gayle Karding

All right, and we have your discharge summary that we can put up on the screen. It's one of the exhibits and—

No? Okay, I was given an exhibit number. If I could just have one moment, I'm going find that, indicating that you have this condition, this Factor V Leiden. And indicating specifically that it was not responsible for your stroke and that's because your stroke was an arterial clot?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes.

Gayle Karding

And Factor V Leiden is specifically responsible for intravenous clotting?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes.

Gayle Karding

Okay. It's at TR-003. I'm going pass up this copy to the panel because we were supposed to have that uploaded so that they can see that.

And I'm specifically referring, Commissioners, to the second paragraph, starting with the word "hematology." Second paragraph on the first page. Hematology was consulted and the patient was started on a Heparin drip. It was felt that her Factor 5 Leiden mutation was not the cause of these arterial clots, as this is associated with Inktree's venous clotting.

So the one pre-existing condition that you're aware you had, they have ruled out as the cause.

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes.

Gayle Karding

And you're not aware of any other pre-existing conditions which would potentially cause you to have a stroke at 41-year-old?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

No, I'm not aware of anything.

Gayle Karding

In the context of that year, or the previous years, were you generally healthy?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes.

Gayle Karding

Okay. What, if any, long-term impact have you felt this has had on you?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

It's like I don't know myself anymore. I know my thoughts and stuff. I can process thoughts, thoughts come quickly, I just can't organize them to get them out. Things that I enjoyed doing, I don't enjoy anymore.

[00:10:00]

I just— I don't know. I'm just— I'm just here. Like it's just all the drama with everything around the whole vaccinations and you can't talk about it and everything else. So just sweep it all under the rug. And it gets to you. Really.

Gayle Karding

Are you on any medication that you weren't on previously?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I am. They prescribed atorvastatin for high cholesterol.

Gayle Karding

Okay.

Leigh-Anne Coolen

And vitamins: vitamin D, vitamin B12

Gayle Karding

Is that in relation to—?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

That's what they prescribed for me when I left the hospital.

Gayle Karding

Okay. Do you have regular updates with your family doctor?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I don't. I haven't had a family doctor for quite some time. I do have a nurse practitioner now. I do have to go and get some blood work done for an update.

Gayle Karding

How often do you have to do that?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Nobody told me anything, so I guess it's my own discretion.

Gayle Karding

Did you ever have any conversations with her after your stroke?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

After my stroke, I did talk with the nurse practitioner at that point. He was very supportive. He seemed like he kind of felt that maybe the vaccine did have something to do with it. That made me feel fantastic, because I'd never had anyone actually on my side before.

Now, I don't have him any longer. He's been replaced with another nurse practitioner. I did speak with her about it, but she's not as vocal as he is about it. So I assume that she doesn't want to talk about it.

Gayle Karding

Are you aware of whether or not your first nurse practitioner—the male—reported the symptoms of your stroke to the vaccine injury database?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I'm not aware that he did.

Gayle Karding

Did the mandates have any other impact on you? Actually, before I move on to that, I understand you did not have the second dose.

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Correct.

Gayle Karding

What, if any, impact did that have on your employment?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

I had to leave my job because they kept at me about another vaccine or an exemption letter. In a follow-up appointment I had with hematology, I asked the doctor on the phone, "Is there any way I can get an exemption letter? Because work is asking me to get the second vaccine." She told me, if I was worried about having another stroke, to get my second vaccination before my fragment injections ran out, which was the prescription that they sent me home with from the hospital.

That's when I gave up and I said, "I'm not going to get an exemption letter. I'm not having another vaccine, so I'll just have to move on." And that's what I did. I quit that job in December 2021.

Gayle Karding

Did the rules and mandates, the vaxx pass, all that sort of stuff: Did that have any other impact on your life?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Well, my husband got the second shot because we were still at that job and they pressured him to get it. He felt like he had to get it to support the family.

My son completely refused it. And I don't blame him. He did feel pressure from his friends. He did get bullied. He did get kicked off the soccer team because he wasn't vaccinated, and he wasn't allowed to play. I told him, "If you want to participate, I'll take you to get vaccinated." "No, I don't want it. I don't want it." And I didn't push any further.

It was a simple question, "if you want it." But because of what happened to me, he refused it and I'm very thankful for that.

Gayle Karding

How old is he?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

He's 18.

Gayle Karding

Okay, those are my questions.

Commissioner Drysdale

You said that you had gotten one dose of one of the vaccines.

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Yes.

Commissioner Drysdale

When you went to get your vaccine, what did the person who gave it to you, the pharmacist, whoever it was that gave it to you: How did they explain to you the risks and the benefits of the vaccine so that you could make an informed decision?

Leigh-Anne Coolen

Nobody explained anything.

Commissioner Drysdale

Thank you.

Gayle Karding

Thank you very much, Miss Coolen.

[00:15:00]



Final Review and Approval: Jodi Bruhn, August 3, 2023.

The evidence offered in this transcript is a true and faithful record of witness testimony given during the National Citizens Inquiry (NCI) hearings. The transcript was prepared by members of a team of volunteers using an “intelligent verbatim” transcription method.

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