

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN2586001

Dated: 18th February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry rules 2006 dated 12th December 2018. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth and address are known to the Inquiry. I am the daughter of GRO-B. My GRO-B and tragically died on the GRO-B GRO-B.

2. My mother was a widower. She was widowed twice before she was 40 years of age. My father, is also the father of my sister (who is 9 years older than me). He died just weeks before I was born. My mother remarried after my father died. My younger brother was born with her second husband, but he also tragically died

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3. For the above reason, my mother was, for me, my only real parent. I never knew my father. I was wholly and totally reliant on her.
4. My mother was a strong determined woman. She had to be to survive the losing of two husbands and have to bring up 3 children almost single handed. She was a very lively outgoing person who loved life.

2. How Infected

1. In the spring of [GRO-B] she had to have, what was understood to be, a relatively routine hysterectomy. She attended the local hospital to her which was the [GRO-B]
2. At that time I was 11 years of age and I don't remember a lot about the procedure. I didn't really understand what was happening.
3. It is my understanding now that in the first operation there had been several cuts to venous sites, therefore, she had to be re-opened for this to be fixed.
4. She had lost a lot of blood, I believe around eight pints, and had blood transfusions during the process.
5. My mother gradually seemed to recover. She put the incident behind her, and life went on.
6. During the 1990's my mother had been becoming generally unwell. She seemed to be quite run down. She had various aches and pains. Nobody could put their finger on what was the cause of this.
7. Her GP referred her to [GRO-B] and she was going therefore various investigations.

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8. I remember it was the autumn of 1996 and my sister had gone with her to GRO-B when she was seeing the doctor about these investigations.
9. Afterwards, they called in to see me. They were very upset. My mother told me that the doctor had said to her that she had Hepatitis C. She also said, quite categorically, that the doctor had told her that it was as a result of the blood transfusion from way back in 1977. This came as a total shock. I was very upset.
10. I had heard about Hepatitis C, but I did not really know anything about it. I knew it was something serious. I thought she was going to die. It seemed to me that she had been given a death sentence.
11. I believe that she was given some information booklets. She spoke to her GP about it I believe.

3. Other infections

1. I do not believe that my mother received any other infections as a result of being given infected blood products.

4. Consent

1. I do not believe that my mother had ever been treated or tested without her knowledge or consent. What is of course extremely troubling is that there was a 20 year gap between when she was infected by Hepatitis C and being told about it. Presumably somebody somewhere must have picked up that she had been given the infection sometime before she was told in 1996. They seem so certain in 1996 that she had been infected in 1976 that one might have thought they would be able to tell her earlier. For all those years, she had been walking around with Hepatitis C without knowing about it.

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5. Impact

1. About a year after the diagnosis, she discussed with the Doctor undergoing treatment. In late 1997 she began treatment with Interferon. This went on for about a year.
2. It made her very poorly. It was like having severe flu.
3. She never really properly recovered from this. She was poorly from then on.
4. I would not say that she ever suffered from any stigma associated with Hepatitis C. We did not discuss it outside the family, so nobody else really knew about it. We are very private as a family.
5. I have not told my children about my mother's infection. They were 17,15 and 8 when my mother died. They were young and very upset at losing their grandmother. I have never felt it was the right time to tell them about it. I find it really difficult to even think about what happened myself. I will tell them when the time is right.
6. Although my mother lived for a number of years after the diagnosis, her quality of life was greatly diminished. We still enjoyed time together as mother and daughter but there was always a limit to what she could do.
7. Family outings tended to be briefer and less ambitious than they might otherwise have been. If she ever did something like an outing or a day out, it would exhaust her and wipe her out.
8. It was very sad to see such a normally robust and active woman reduced to somebody who had to constantly limit herself.

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9. She continued to try and present a mentally strong and brave face but I think she was also mentally impacted by knowing that she had such a terrible disease through no fault of her own. She was upset at the thought of being ill and that she might not live as long as she otherwise would do.
10. We are a close family and my mother's children all lived within a few miles of her. We were able to keep an eye on her and help her out.
11. In 1996, when my mother was given her diagnosis, my children were aged 4 and 2 respectively. They never knew their grandmother as the lively, fun person she had previously been. They only really ever saw her ill. That was even more so for my youngest who was born in 2001.
12. My mother of course loved my children but she was not there for them as she would have been if she had not been ill.
13. My mother could not babysit or spend quality time with my children on her own. I would see other grandparents doing this, but due to her illness, my other couldn't.
14. Mum was upset at being so ill all the time. She couldn't look to the future.
15. She had little to make life worth while apart from her family. She had been a sociable outgoing woman but she had to give up her social life. She was brave and courageous but was not the woman she was.
16. Her decline was very sudden when it happened. In GRO-B she collapsed and was vomiting blood. She was admitted to hospital. They found she had liver cancer and it was quite far

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advanced. There was nothing much they could do. She came home and died at home. She was cremated.

6. Treatment/Care Support

1. To my knowledge, my mother did not face any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care and support as a consequence of being infected.

7. Financial Assistance

1. I can remember my mother telling me that she had heard on the radio a Professor talking about Hepatitis C and mention the Skipton Fund.
2. She sent off the paperwork off and fairly quickly got a pay out of £20,000. That would have been in around 2005.
3. We received another payment on her death in 2010 of £25,000 and a further payment of £25,000 in 2013.

8. Other Issues

1. It remains a source of great pain to me that my mother struggled through her later years battling disease as a result of being infected with contaminated blood. She always put a brave face on things but her quality of life was not what it should have been. She missed out on so much and so did I and my children. I still miss her every day.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed... GRO-B

Dated... 18th February 2019