

ANONYMOUS

12 DEC 2018

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN0733/001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 10th December 2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 12 November 2018.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth and address are known to the Inquiry.
2. I am disabled and I retired in 2001. My last occupation was at the Waddon Hospital where I was cooking in the canteen. I got married in 1960 and I have 4 children with my husband.
3. I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus ("HCV"), which I contracted as a result of being given several transfusions of contaminated blood to treat a haemorrhage I had a month after I gave birth to my youngest son.
4. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment that I received and the devastating impact it has had on my life and the rest of my family.
5. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement. My husband

also assists me, as sometimes my memory is not very good especially with dates and names.

Section 2. How Infected

6. On GRO-B 1967 at Mayday Hospital in London I gave birth to my youngest son via a planned Caesarean section and everything went as scheduled. After a week I went home; I was feeling well.
7. A month later, on GRO-B 1967 while I was home alone with my 7 years old daughter I started to loose a lot of blood. I was having a haemorrhage and I was so scared that I sent my daughter to call the neighbours and to look for some help. Our neighbours called the GP who quickly arrived.
8. The doctor immediately understood the gravity of the situation and called an ambulance. The ambulance arrived with a specialist: before being able to bring me to the hospital and perform an emergency surgery, the specialist had to obtain my husband's consent.
9. At that time my husband was working as a coach driver for GRO-B and that day he was driving a coach to Bournemouth. As the company couldn't reach him while he was driving a bus full of passenger, the hospital asked Bournemouth Police to get hold of him; it was like a movie. My husband was very scared and confused when the police officers stopped him in the middle of the street asking him to leave the bus and to go with them to the police station.
10. Once arrived at the station, they explained him the situation and he could speak on the phone with the specialist and as a next of kin to give the consent to the surgery.
11. In the meantime, I was loosing so much blood that the consultant, who was afraid I was going to die, decided to make some transfusions. When he spoke to my husband and obtained the consent, they immediately put me on the ambulance and drove me to the hospital.
12. In those hours I lost so much blood that the mattress where I was laying was dripping blood on the floor. Later on, as we didn't know how to get rid of the bloodstains, we had to burn the mattress.

ANONYMOUS

13. The doctors told me that at home at first and then in the hospital, I have been given 17 bottles of blood.
14. I went home after 2-3 weeks and a home care from the hospital came to help me with housekeeping and with the kids while I was recovering. It has been really helpful especially considering that my husband was out working the whole day.
15. Nobody ever explained me why I had the haemorrhage and it took me 4-5 months to recover.
16. After a couple of years, I started to feel unwell. My blood pressure went very high, I went into early menopause and I had a lot of pain. All of a sudden I also started to suffer of insomnia and jaundice: I was moody and nervous and I had horrible headaches.
17. The specialist at Mayday Hospital ran some tests and gave me some tablets for the high blood pressure. I don't know if he already knew that I had Hepatitis C; he never mentioned it to me.
18. Around 1985-1990 they found a spot in my bladder and they thought it was gallstones but because the area was very delicate they couldn't perform a surgery; or at least, this is what they told me.
19. They also said that I had a spot in my liver but despite the doctors were running blood tests on a monthly basis they never found out anything about it.
20. The situation changed when on 5 October 2006 the GP did a blood test. At first he said that everything was fine but then, a week later he told me to urgently go to his practice.
21. He asked me whether I had transfusions before and I told him everything about what happened in 1967. He told me that as a precaution and to try to shed light on my situation he made further analysis and he found out that I had Hepatitis C.
22. I was in shock. I only remember that I told him that the day after I was supposed to meet my dentist and I didn't know what to do. The GP told me to warn the dentist about HCV.

Section 3. Other Infections

23. To the best of my knowledge I do not believe that as a result of being given infected blood products I have contracted any infection other than the HCV.

Section 4. Consent

24. To the best of my knowledge I believe that I have always been treated or tested with my knowledge and consent.

25. As I will explain below, I raised my concern and explained my fear to be used as a guinea pig to the specialist who offered me with a brand new treatment to cure HCV.

26. I am not sure that I always received adequate or full information. It took them 40 years to tell me that my blood was infected with HCV. I don't know if they knew it before then.

Section 5. Impact

27. When the GP diagnosed me with HCV he explained me what it was and which were the associated risks. He then referred me to a liver specialist at Mayday Hospital.

28. Both the GP and the consultant told me that, according to my history, the only way I could have got infected with HCV was through the blood transfusions I received in 1967.

29. The consultant asked me about my drinking habits and whether I ever used drugs in the past. I told him that I never used drugs and that I was not a drinker: I barely had a glass of wine at Christmas.

30. After the visit, the consultant said that he wanted to do a liver biopsy. When the nurse rang me in 2007 to set up the date for the biopsy she asked me whether I was living with someone because after the biopsy there was a risk of haemorrhage and it was important that I would have not been alone.

ANONYMOUS

31. She scared me and I got very angry: yes, my husband would have helped me but I didn't want to undergo a surgery that could have caused a new haemorrhage. I contacted the specialist again and I asked him to talk to him in person.
32. When I met him he told that it was true and that there was actually a risk of a new haemorrhage but that it was up to me to decide whether to undergo the biopsy or not. He said that the nurse should have not told me those things in that way.
33. To me, the whole situation didn't make any sense at all: 40 years had passed since I had the transfusions and they still wanted to make analysis and surgery. I couldn't understand how possibly this HCV could have appeared in my body after so much time.
34. I decided not to undergo the biopsy and the specialist gave instructions to my GP to keep a closer eye on my situation. It was 2007 and I have to say that my GP did nothing till 2013 when he referred me to the King's College Hospital in London.
35. Herein 2014, I met the consultant and he ran blood test, ultrasound, fibroscan and TC scan. He told me that he would have cured my HCV with a brand new three months treatment, which would have cost the NHS £30,000. I asked him whether he wanted to use me as a guinea pig and if they were experimenting new treatments on 80 years old people.
36. The doctor told me that they were not sure whether the treatment would have worked and that once I had decided to start the new cure my medical reference would have been King's College Hospital and not my local hospital in Croydon anymore.
37. I was already taking too many tablets for my high blood pressure and despite they would have paid for an ambulance, I didn't want to travel all the way to Central London if I had had any problem. So I refused the new treatment; I thought it was too much for me, at my age.
38. After I declined his offer, the specialist decided that without the therapy, I would need to undergo 6 months checks. They regularly test me and they have already found out that my liver is swollen and that there is risk that I develop cirrhosis.

ANONYMOUS

39. In all these years I always thought and said to everybody that the blood that runs in my veins is not mine; I am sure about it and no one can convince me of the contrary.
40. My family saw the difference in me, how I deeply changed over the years. My kids in particular have been badly affected. They were young when all the effects of HCV emerged and I started to feel unwell. I was always tired, with headaches and constantly in a different mood.
41. Even at work, I struggled a lot: I didn't feel well and I was always very tired. But I had to work and after that I had to go home and take care of my 4 kids and my husband. It has not been easy but I had no other options.
42. Hepatitis C didn't have any impact on my education: I never went to school and I cannot read or write so the fact that I was infected didn't worsen my situation.
43. From the financial point of view, we struggled a lot. In 1974 I had a work accident and I started to suffer of a condition called frozen shoulder. It was very hard if not impossible to work and do anything at home.
44. I have been asked whether I ever faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing any treatment. Apart from when I declined the treatments they offered me I never had any problem in getting medicines or cures.
45. But it was completely different with my old dentist. I remember that I went to his practice for a check up and for hygiene. But he refused to do the hygiene and he only made the check up.
46. At a certain point I also needed to have some teeth removed and he insisted that I had it done at the hospital instead of his practice, as he didn't want to touch me. I didn't want to go to the hospital.
47. Then I changed dentist and the new dentist was much nicer: she never had any problem in taking care of me. Since I changed everything worked very well.
48. My family and I had to cope with the stigma associated to Hepatitis C. People were staring at me and everybody was asking me why I was always tired or why my face was yellow but nobody knew why and nobody could explained it to me. It has been very sad but I didn't have answers, neither for me nor for the others. My family and close friends knew about the physical and mental effects and the fact that I didn't know what was

ANONYMOUS

wrong with me. But all the other people were simply pointing the finger to the woman who sometimes had a yellow face and that was always tired. It really hurt me.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

49. I have been asked whether I have received or whether I have ever been offered any counselling or psychological support. The answer to both questions is no.
50. At a certain point I met a specialist to deal with the lack of physical balance but I never met a therapist. I am not sure I understand what they do and how counselling actually works.
51. As I said before, I never had time to think of problems as I had a big family to take care of.
52. When I came home from the hospital, the home care has been really helpful but that was it. I had to deal with everything by myself and only my family helped me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

53. I never received any financial assistance from any of the Trusts and the Funds set up to distribute payments.
54. In 2011-2012 tried to apply to Skipton Fund but they rejected my application because they said that some evidence was missing.
55. I contacted 3 times Mayday Hospital but they never replied until 2011 when they sent me a letter saying that my records were misplaced.
56. I tried to appeal the first decision but Skipton Fund declined my application again.
57. I had a terrible experience with them: they were rude and nobody helped me.
58. Since 2010-2011 I receive a disability allowance of £330 a month. But that's it.

ANONYMOUS

Section 8. Other Issues

59. I have never been involved in any campaigning or litigation.

60. If it hadn't been infected with Hepatitis C, my life would have been very different. I had to keep on looking forward, working and taking care of my family; but I would have done a lot of things differently and life would have been much easier.

61. I have been asked what I expect from this Inquiry: I want answers. I want to know what happened and why. I want that this Inquiry makes sure that those who are culpable are held accountable for the decisions they made and that affected so many people. Before the Inquiry started we had nothing but this is our chance to have some answers: when you suffer you want to know why and what causes your pain. I asked the Skipton Fund but they never replied or gave me any answer.

62. People have been treated like beasts: my husband had to work even harder because I couldn't work anymore. The government thinks that we do it for money but even if money can help I still want to know why all this happened and why nobody said anything earlier.

Statement of Truth

As I cannot read or write my husband read me this witness statement drafted by the inquiry team.

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

Signed _____ GRO-B _____
Dated 10/12-2018

As my wife cannot read or write (but she can sign) I read her this statement drafted by the Inquiry Team.

Signed _____
Dated 10/12/18