

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN0803001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 01/02/2019

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 16th January 2019.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B and my date of birth is GRO-B 1981. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am married with two children.

2. I intend to speak about my mother's infection with Hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment she received and the impact it had on our lives.

Section 2. How Affected

3. My mother GRO-C received blood transfusions in the 1970s and 1980s, and was infected with Hepatitis C. These details have been provided to the Inquiry by my mother in her statement - please refer to her statement for further details.

Section 3. Other Infections

4. My mother was not infected with any infections other than Hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

5. Please refer to my mother's statement.

Section 5. Impact

6. In 2010, my mother fell and there was a small abrasion on her lower leg. You wouldn't have thought anything of it, but there was such a drastic deterioration that we thought there must have been an underlying issue and we knew that something was wrong. This was when she first developed ulcers, which then spread to both legs.
7. From this time to four or five years later when we were finally told she had Hepatitis C, it had been an on-going battle to find out what was wrong with her. It's shocking that the medical staff couldn't see the deterioration right before their eyes.
8. During these four or five years I was living and working in London. My wife GRO-B was working in Scotland, so she was closer to my mother and would check in to make sure she was okay, deliver shopping, and assist with household chores and dinners. During this time my mother's condition was rapidly going downhill. Trying to contact people over the phone was a nightmare. The communication was practically non-existent and it was always a fight to get information about my mother's blood tests and appointments.
9. During this period my wife was pregnant, and my mother's condition was putting a huge strain on her health. GRO-B was planning to move to London due to better work opportunities, but because of my mother's illness we decided that I would move back to Scotland. Prior to me

returning to Scotland, my mum's worsening condition had a huge impact on our work as we had to leave work early and take half days to attend appointments, particularly as I had to journey up from London to visit her.

10. I feel extremely disappointed in the entire process up to being told that it actually was Hepatitis C, because we would have loved to find out about the illness and the infection at the start. For those four or five years the process was poor at every level; from the way the GP handled everything to the reporting of the consultants. I feel like the GP should have done more and the referrals to the consultants should have been made earlier. I think that the only reason those referrals were even made was because my brother and I banged on a lot of tables for more to be done and pushed to speak to the right people - it was our family that forced further testing to be done. Everyone just kept referring her on and on, saying that she was a mystery! If it were not for our family I believe that the medical staff would have continued to pass my mum around until the inevitable happened.

11. In June 2014, my wife went to visit my mother and found her slumped on the floor at home. She was admitted to GRO-B for around 2 weeks before being discharged in extreme pain, pain so bad that she collapsed again at home. After being rushed back to hospital, my mother was admitted to GRO-B This is when Dr Kennedy took charge in the infectious disease ward.

12. During mum's 10-month stay in GRO-B I visited her every night and every weekend to take her food, drinks and magazines to try to keep her sane. While she was just sitting there, I felt that the isolation really affected her - my mother used to go out dancing and to other social events two or three times a week. She doesn't do that anymore or go out as much as she used to, and even now her mobility is still getting progressively worse. I would say that the isolation during to the 10

months in the infectious disease ward has had an extreme impact on her social skills and ability to interact.

13. While my mother was in hospital, the priest was called as she was in high dependency for 5 days. I was asked to call my brother over from Ireland as she may not improve and we were asked if we wished to resuscitate. This deterioration was because of the different types of treatments and drugs. The doctor said that her body was saying "enough is enough". She was on a ventilator and all the various machines, and I remember wondering how anyone could get any sleep with all that beeping and ticking – I can still hear it now.
14. I had to call my brother to get him to come. It was the most difficult phone call I have ever made because I couldn't panic, but I also needed to stress that he had to get on the next flight. I told my wife, brother, uncle and other family members what was happening, but I didn't tell anyone else because no one really knew what was going on. When my brother came we were asked if we wanted to resuscitate or not. It was quite a harrowing experience.
15. The lack of information and lack of support throughout the entire time was overwhelming. I specifically asked whether there was a reintegration or counselling programme, but I was told that it did not exist. I asked whether there was a rehabilitation programme to help rebuild her muscles so that she could regain some of her ability to walk, but no one was forthcoming about this either. I had to make numerous calls, letters and meetings to ensure that amenities were in place for when my mum got out of hospital, such as a stair lift, handrails, a care team etc. Every part of the discharge was a challenge and the lack of service was extremely disappointing.
16. There have been endless things that she has either missed or been unable to participate in because of her illness - birthdays, christenings and births. Her integration with the grandchildren has been hugely affected because she can only just sit there and she can't get involved. It

is not that she doesn't have a relationship with the children, it just isn't what it should be - it is not normal at all. For example my family are planning to go to the museum today but my mother wouldn't be physically capable of walking around, so she can't go. She used to jump on the bus and go to Dublin or Ireland for a week, and this has all just stopped. It has affected her social skills because she doesn't go to events anymore and is unable to attend events with her friends. My mum used to be a keen walker and would regularly go on trips. However this has now stopped due to her inability to walk any distance at all. Since my mum's discharge, she has had to cope with being reintegrated into every day life, however due to her physical ailments this has been extremely difficult. The isolation in the infectious disease ward certainly affected her mind and I don't think she is as sharp as she used to be.

17. This whole thing has had a huge impact on the entire family. Family events take second place and this has been the main topic of conversation since my mum's fall in 2010 and subsequent decline. The whole experience has been life changing. If it weren't for everything that happened, my wife and I probably would not be living in Scotland - in fact I would say that it is likely that we would be somewhere else with different jobs. My wife and I had an around the world ticket, and while we were travelling we lived in New Zealand. We decided to come home and work for a bit to earn some money before continuing on, but we came home and never went back due to my mum's condition.
18. It has had a huge financial impact in terms of the cost of petrol, flights, phone calls etc. Getting the Skipton Fund payments were good, but there has been a number of things that we have had to change in the house, such as the kitchen and the additional handrails. I had to fight with the council to get a stair lift and I think that we had to contribute to the cost in the end, but I can't remember exactly. My mother had to pay for her own walker and walking sticks, and she has to pay £250 for special shoes with crafted insoles that help with her pain from the ulcers. When I was not living in Scotland I was flying up and down from London

and my brother was flying from Ireland, so there have been huge financial implications over the last 9 years.

- 19. None of the doctors or consultants ever said that I should get tested for Hepatitis C.
- 20. I have not suffered any stigma from people knowing that my mother had Hepatitis C.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

- 21. I have never been offered any form of counselling or psychological support whatsoever. Otherwise, please refer to my mother's statement.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

- 22. Please refer to my mother's statement.

Section 8. Other Issues

- 23. I have no other issues to raise.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed  GRO-B

Dated 23/3/2019