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Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN0880/001

Exhibits: **WITN0880/002 – 005**

Dated: 24 April 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 14 March 2018.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B I was born in 1939. My address is known to the Inquiry. I formerly worked as a District Nurse, retiring due to a back injury in 1989. I am married with two children, three grandchildren and a great grandchild.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus, which I believe I contracted as a result of being given a transfusion of contaminated blood due to complications arising during a planned caesarean section in 1973.
3. In particular, I intend to discuss how I found out about my infected status, how the illness has affected me, the treatment I have received, and the

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impact it has had on my life and on that of the rest of my family. I will also talk about how I have been unable to gain access to my medical records from the time of my transfusion in 1973 which has prevented me from being able to apply to a trust fund for financial help.

4. I confirm I have chosen not to be legally represented and I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.
5. I confirm I would like to remain anonymous.

Section 2. How Infected

6. I became aware of being infected with the Hepatitis C virus in 1995. Previously I had only been admitted to hospital on three occasions.
7. The first time I was admitted to hospital was on GRO-B 1972. I had a planned caesarean section for the birth of my first child at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. This went according to plan and there were no complications.
8. On GRO-B 1973 I had another planned caesarean section at the Royal Berkshire Hospital with the birth of my second child. I was taken to theatre at 1:30pm and given a general anaesthetic. I woke up in recovery close to 8:00pm. I know this because I had not yet seen my husband since being taken into theatre. There was some discussion about it being late and that visiting hours were over. I remember the ward Sister telling me there had been complications during the procedure and that I had lost a lot of blood. I can remember her cleaning me up, dressing me and putting a drip through my nightdress sleeve. I could see the blood. The drip was a blood transfusion.
9. I was not given any details on how much blood I had lost or how much blood I had received overall. This was the first time I had been given blood and I have not received any since then.

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10. In 1995 I was admitted to the Royal Berkshire Hospital with severe breathing difficulties. The doctors treated me for a serious chest infection and fluid on the lungs. I was admitted to intensive care for six days and spent another 12 days on the ward.
11. I was then referred to the Princess Margaret Hospital in Birmingham for further blood tests. I was not told at the time what the blood tests were for. I attended a follow-up consultation with my husband and a doctor informed me I was infected with the Hepatitis C virus. Soon after my family were tested and thankfully the results were negative.
12. This was the first time I had been told of my infection with the Hepatitis C virus. In my work as a nurse I had come across Hepatitis B, but not Hepatitis C. I did not understand how I could have contracted the virus or what the diagnosis meant for me.
13. No one at the time mentioned anything to us about the Hepatitis C virus and its connection with blood. I now have a better understanding of the connection. I believe I was infected as a result of the blood transfusion I had in 1973 with the birth of my second child.
14. I have tried to access my medical records relating to the caesarean section in 1973 but have been told my records were destroyed. I first tried in 1995 when I found out about being infected. I asked my treating consultant if I could see my medical records from my caesarean section. She asked me why I wanted to do so, which gave me the impression that she did not want to let me access the information. Two days later I received a letter from her telling me my notes had been destroyed.
15. Sometime later my treating nurse consultant, GRO-B told me about the Skipton Fund. I made an application to the fund in 2011. This was declined because I could not provide medical records in support of my claim that I had received blood products as part of my caesarean section (WITN0880/002).

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16. I applied to the Health Records Department of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) in 2012 to access my maternity records. I received an acknowledgment letter from them dated 16 November 2017 (WITN0880/003). On 24 April 2013 I received a letter from the Trust's Health Records Department stating that prior to 1990 maternity records were only kept for 21 years and that as a result my records had been destroyed (WITN0880/004).
17. I cannot accept that my records no longer exist. In June 2013 I approached my local MP, GRO-B and asked for his help in the matter. He wrote a letter on 25 June 2013 to the Trust on my behalf requesting help in accessing my medical records (WITN0880/005). In July 2013 I filled out an application to access the health records held by the Trust. In October and November 2018, a friend who worked as a magistrate, wrote letters of support on my behalf to try and get hold of my medical records from the time of my caesarean section in 1973.
18. To date, I have not been able to access the relevant medical records relating to the birth of my second daughter in 1973. I am convinced that I was infected with the Hepatitis C virus as a result of the blood transfusion I received at that time. I have never used drugs, and never suffered a needlestick injury when working as a District Nurse.
19. When I was first diagnosed with the Hepatitis C virus in 1995, a consultant treated me for six months with Interferon injections. The blood test results at the end of the treatment showed that the virus was still in my system. The consultant did not give me detailed information about the results or my prognosis at the time. Eventually my file was handed over to a second treating doctor without any explanation for the change. My impression was that the first consultant did not want to treat me anymore. When I saw the second doctor about my Hepatitis C infection, he responded by asking me what I wanted him to do about it. I felt like he did not want to help me and I did not see him again.

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20. I remained in a state of shock following my diagnosis and I did not understand the lack of care and why nothing further could be done to treat my Hepatitis C. The way the consultants treated me made me feel like there were no further options. I received no further follow-up or treatment for my infection for about twenty years when my general practitioner (GP) referred me to **GRO-B** a specialist nurse consultant at the Viral Hepatitis Clinic at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Since then I have been seeing **GRO-B** regularly.
21. Under **GRO-B**'s supervision I have received three separate treatments for the Hepatitis C virus. The first treatment was unsuccessful. In or around April 2018 I had my second treatment consisting of a combination of Eplclusa and Ribavirin. I felt very ill and I had to stop after seven weeks on the advice of my GP due to significant side effects. Finally, in December 2018 I started treatment with Zepatier tablets. I am still waiting for the final results from this treatment, but it appears it may have been successful in eradicating the Hepatitis C virus from my system.
22. **GRO-B** made me aware of the connection between the Hepatitis C virus and liver disease. I now know that my liver has been badly damaged by the virus.

Section 3. Other Infections

23. To the best of my knowledge I have not contracted any other infection as a result of the blood transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

24. I cannot say that I have been treated without my consent. I had lost a lot of blood during the caesarean section and needed the transfusion. I was in no fit state to provide or withhold consent at that point.

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25. In terms of treatments for the Hepatitis C virus, I have consented to all the treatments offered to me.

Section 5. Impact

26. Having Hepatitis C is a stigma. It makes me feel unclean.
27. I get very depressed all of the time. I do not know if I will ever get over the unfairness of this, mentally and physically. My husband says that the day I found out about it, broke me.
28. I have only told a few close people about my infection and their reactions have been fine. However, I feel that as a result of being infected with Hepatitis C I am a different person. For example, I do not really like to go out.
29. I am afraid of passing something on to my family. I never let anyone touch me if I cut or hurt myself in case I infect them. I keep my distance.
30. I have only recently been told by GRO-B that I have cirrhosis of the liver. Over the years, I have had to deal with a lot of illness and I now believe some of this may have been related to the Hepatitis C infection.
31. In sharing my story with the Inquiry, I have been asked about what the financial impact of my infection has been on me and my family. I must admit that I had not really considered this. You do what you have to do to get to appointments and so on.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

32. Outside of my immediate family, it has taken a long time for me to find someone I could talk to about my Hepatitis C infection. I now have access to a contact at the Hep C Trust, to GRO-B and recently to my GP. Talking helps a little, but it is not going to take away the infection.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

33. I have not been able to access financial assistance from any of the Trusts or Funds set up to distribute payments because I do not have my maternity records from 1973.

Section 8. Other Issues

34. I feel that I should be compensated for what I have been through, it was not my fault. I know the government put aside money for people who were affected in those years like I was. I have tried to access my medical records to prove my eligibility, but have not been successful so far. I get to the stage where I cannot deal with it anymore.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 24/04/2019