

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No.: WITN2156001

Exhibits: WITN2156002-005

Dated: 30th June 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 5th November 2018.

I, **GRO-B** will say as follows:

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B** My date of birth is **GRO-B** 1972. My address is known to the inquiry. I am on disability benefits. I intend to speak about my contraction of hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me and my family.
2. I can confirm that I have appointed Thompsons Solicitors to be my legal representative. I confirm that the inquiry should send all correspondence regarding me to Thompsons.

Section 2. How Infected

3. In [GRO-B] when I was [GRO-B] years of age, I was involved in a serious road traffic accident [GRO-B]. I was rushed by ambulance and taken to the [GRO-B]. I was unconscious at the time and do not remember anything about it but I was transferred to the Western Infirmary in Glasgow. I was detained at the Western Infirmary for six weeks. I had a number of operations whilst I was detained. I had a broken upper and lower jaw, severe facial injuries and a compound fracture to my left tibia and fibula. I was admitted to intensive care to begin with. I do not know the name of the consultant whose care I was under.
4. My injuries were so severe I was rushed down for surgery. I received multiple blood transfusions during one of my operations. This is noted in my medical notes. I produce this note in evidence and refer to it as **WITN215602**.
5. As a result of getting a blood transfusion, I received contaminated blood and I was infected with hepatitis C.
6. In September 1997, I received an envelope to my door. It was a brown envelope marked private and confidential. I remember it well. The letter was from a clinical nurse specialist from [GRO-B], [GRO-B]. Her name was [GRO-B]. The letter said that as a result of my blood transfusion in 1990, it was feared that I may have contracted hepatitis C. I did not know what hepatitis C was. I had a complete meltdown. At the time, the AIDS virus was very prevalent and I thought it was something like that.
7. There was no information or guidance in the letter to help me understand or manage the infection. [GRO-B] did ask me to make an appointment and I did so.

8. At my appointment with GRO-B she asked me if I had heard of hepatitis C, I said, "No I haven't". I told her that I had heard of AIDS. She told me that some people had also got AIDS through receiving contaminated blood. She told me that they were doing a 'look back exercise' to test people that had had a blood transfusion within a certain period. My transfusion fell into that period and she took my bloods for testing.

9. Two weeks later, GRO-B came to my home address and told me that the results of my blood tests showed that I had hepatitis C. I was completely devastated. She did give me a lot of leaflets to help me understand and manage the infection. There is the microbiology report in my medical notes dated 30th September, 1997 that show my hepatitis C status. I produce this in evidence and refer to it as **WITN215603**.

10. GRO-B did talk to me about the risks of passing on the infection through blood to blood contact and sexual intercourse. She told me the risks were small. I had two young boys at this point and all I could think about was if they also had hepatitis C. GRO-B said she would refer me to GRO-D, a liver specialist at Gartnavel General Hospital. I produce in evidence from my medical records a letter dated 21st October, 1997 that relates to this and refer to it as **WITN215604**.

11. My only view on how I was told that I had hepatitis C is that waiting for my blood results was torture. It was like being on death row, as I knew hepatitis C affected your life expectancy. At that time, I had two young boys and I was so frightened that I would die and leave them. GRO-B
GRO-B
GRO-B The pressure and stress I was under at this time was enormous.

Section 3. Other Infections

12. I did not receive any other infection or infections other than hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood during my blood transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

13. I do not know if my blood was tested without my knowledge, consent or for the purposes of research. GRO-B told me that my blood would be tested for hepatitis C; she did not say if there were testing it for anything else.

Section 5. Impact

14. The impact of being infected with hepatitis C was enormous and totally changed my life. I was a happy-go-lucky person before. I love to have a drink and socialise. Mentally, I became severely depressed as I believed I was going to die. I had suicidal thoughts and to be truthful, if it had not been for my boys, I would have committed suicide. I cut myself off from the world and became very insular. My whole positive outlook on life disappeared and all I could think about was leaving my children as I believed I was going to die.
15. Physically, I became very ill. I was extremely fatigued and wanted to stay in bed all day. I had extreme nausea and could not eat. I lost a lot of weight and at one point I was emaciated and went down to six stone. It is the fatigue that is horrendous and even now, I spend days in my pyjamas as I have no energy or notion to get dressed and go out.
16. I developed reactive arthritis as a result of being infected with hepatitis C. I was referred to Dr Hunter, a rheumatologist, at Gartnavel hospital. I saw him for a few years but eventually I was told there was nothing they could do and I would just have to live with it.

17. [GRO-B] referred me to [GRO-D] at the Haematology Department at Gartnavel hospital. Although I was under the care of [GRO-D] and I did see him, I usually saw one of the nurses her name is Liz Spence. [GRO-D] said they were trialling a new treatment for hepatitis C. He said that some people would receive the real treatment and others a placebo to see if the treatment would work. I was given an information sheet about the trial. I produce a copy of this information sheet in evidence and identify it as **WITN215605**. I took a tablet, it was like a smartie. I took this tablet over a few months and during that time, I was attending the Haematology Department to have my bloods taken on a regular basis. After a few months I was told by [GRO-D] that I had been given the placebo. [GRO-D] did say that I would be offered the real treatment when it came available. He told me that the treatment that was on trial at that time had been found to cause severe side effects. He said people experienced extreme fatigue and nausea. I asked him if it was necessary for me to take it. [GRO-B]
- [GRO-B] He told me that my liver functions were stable so it was not crucial for me to have the treatment at that time. He did say I would need treatment at some point, as my liver functions would deteriorate over time.
18. I have not had any difficulties or obstacles being offered the treatment. It has been my choice not to take the treatment because of my personal circumstances.
19. [GRO-D] did say to me that I was not the only person to contract hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood. He sent me for a liver biopsy. I remember I was put in a side room at Gartnavel hospital on my own. The procedure itself was extremely painful. It consisted of inserting a large needle through my side into my liver. I remember it was so painful that I asked one of the nurses for pain relief. She said, *"You really think you're going to get pain relief, the only drugs you will get is paracetamol"*. She thought I was a junkie (drug user). I told her that I did not do drugs. She said, *"You don't get hepatitis C from not doing drugs"*. The nurses were all gowned up with masks on. I felt like a leper, it was a horrible experience.

20. My infected status did not impact upon any other treatments, medical or dental care.

21. The impact of being infected with hepatitis C has been huge on my private, family and social life. My dream job was to be a midwife, obviously that was impossible for me with hepatitis C. I became a very private person and did not socialise other than with my family. I have never had employment because it would be impossible for me to work because of my fatigue. GRO-B

GRO-B This has limited holidays and family outings. I have become a recluse really and rarely go out; I spend most days in my pyjamas. I would spend all day in bed if I could. I feel very guilty as GRO-B works full time but still has to do all the housework. I just do not have the energy to do anything. Going out for a family meal is a fairly normal thing to do as a family. We do not do this as I have no appetite or notion to eat.

22. I am aware of the stigma associated with hepatitis C. It is associated with drug users and sex workers. I live in a small village and no one knows I have hepatitis C. I have not even told my children for fear that if they tell any of their friends, they too may be affected by the stigma.

23. In October 2016, I was admitted into hospital with a shoulder injury that required surgery. The consultant I was under was called GRO-D I remember I asked him when I would be going down for surgery. He said that I would be the last person to be operated on because they would have to "*scrub the place*" after operating on me because of my hepatitis C. Once again, this made me feel like a leper, unclean and dirty. This is exactly the same reason I did not tell my family or friends of my infected status.

24. The impact on my family has been that GRO-B has to do everything around the house as well as working full-time. My children have not had an active fun mother. They have become used to me sitting around in my pyjamas, often in a low mood.

25. There was no educational effects on me as a result of contracting hepatitis C. As stated earlier, I have not been able to pursue my dream job as a midwife. My extreme fatigue has meant that I have never had paid employment.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

26. When I was told I had hepatitis C by GRO-B she did come out to see me a few times to offer support.

27. I have never been offered counselling or psychological support. I do not know if there is any support available.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

28. I think it was GRO-D that told me that there was financial assistance for people who had been infected with contaminated blood. He told me about the Skipton Fund.

29. I received a lump sum of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund. I cannot remember when I actually received that amount, it was many years ago.

30. Two or three years ago, I received a further lump sum of £30,000 from the Skipton Fund.

31. I have also received two winter fuel payments of £500 from the Skipton Fund.

32. In December 2018, I was awarded £1500 a month from the Scottish Government.

33. I did not experience any difficulties or obstacles in applying for and obtaining the financial assistance that was available. My only comment would be that

ANONYMOUS

the financial assistance available was not widely publicised, therefore they may have been other financial assistance available that I did not know about.

34. I do not remember if there were any preconditions imposed on the making of an application for financial assistance.

35. The financial assistance I have received in no way compensates me for the mental and physical impact of contracting hepatitis C. I have never been able to work and earn my own money.

Section 8. Other Issues

36. I did, in the past, try to make a claim against the National Health Service for being infected with contaminated blood. My solicitors at that time pursuing my claim were GRO-B I remember throughout the process I paid over £3000 in legal fees. Eventually I was told I had missed the timescale to make a claim and I could no longer proceed.

37. I do not wish to remain anonymous in this inquiry.

ANONYMOUS

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated 30-6-19