

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN2569001

Dated: 19th 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 is GRO-B

GRO-B

GRO-B I live at this address with my wife GRO-B

ANONYMOUS

2. I intend to speak about my infection of hepatitis C, which I contracted from infected blood products in the late 1970's and 1980's. In particular, the nature of my illness and how the illness has affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it has had on my family and me. I also wish to speak about my brother [GRO-B: B1] infection of hepatitis C and how that has affected me.

2. How Infected

1. I have suffered with mild Haemophilia A all of my life. My brother [B1] also has Haemophilia A as well as my deceased brother [GRO-B: B2]
2. Following a road traffic accident about [GRO-B] years ago, I was admitted to the [GRO-B]. It was here I was given Factor VIII blood products. I was subsequently given Factor VIII after having two other road traffic accidents as well as for dental surgery. I believe I was exposed to this infected blood over a ten-year period.
3. I remember having a letter sometime in 1997 saying something was positive which I thought meant everything was ok. I don't remember what it was about but I thought it was just a routine letter giving results for a routine blood test. I didn't hear anymore about this.
4. Following my brother's death in [GRO-B] of hepatitis C through an infected blood transfusion, I was invited by [GRO-B] to go in for screening. I didn't know my brother had contracted this infection, he didn't tell me or any other family member.
5. I was again invited back to the hospital where I was asked if anyone was with me, which there wasn't and was told to sit down. I was then told I had been exposed to hepatitis C and there was nothing they could do for me. Around the same time I learned my brother [B1] had contracted the hepatitis C infection from contaminated blood too.

ANONYMOUS

3. Other Infections

1. Possibly vCJD.

4. Consent

1. Prior to me finding out about the hepatitis C, I would routinely have blood tests. I assumed it was because of the haemophilia. There was a time when I didn't attend hospital for a number of years and that was because I wasn't sent for. I think this was between 1997 and 2003. Hepatitis C was only mentioned to me after my brother B2 death.

5. Impact

1. When I was told I had contracted the hepatitis c through infected blood a black cloud suddenly appeared, it was doom. I thought I was going to die as I was told there was nothing that could be done for me. I suddenly became depressed. I wasn't offered any support or information. I just had to walk away from the hospital and that was it.
2. I wasn't really suffering any symptoms of hepatitis C and in all honesty I wish they hadn't told me. It was very difficult to take in and as soon as I knew my life spiralled into doom and gloom.
3. It wasn't until 2006 when I was offered treatment. I was prescribed Interferon and the side effects were discussed with me. It was a horrible drug, all the side effects that can happen I got. I was in a deeper depression, suffering anxiety, constant diarrhoea and the pain in my joints was excruciating so much so I couldn't walk. It was decided to take me off the medication after about six months of treatment.
4. In 2007 I was informed I was cleared of the virus.

ANONYMOUS

5. My marriage has suffered as a result of being diagnosed with hepatitis C. Even now my wife and I do not have a sexual relationship. It may be because of the depression I suffer, but it's affected what we had in terms of a loving relationship.
6. When I was undergoing the treatment, I had to give up my parcel courier business. Even though I explained to customers that the treatment was making me ill, each of them dropped one by one.
7. I looked very poorly, my joints and fingers were swelling, and my finger nails were falling out. I think it frightened them into thinking they may catch something from me, they certainly felt I was a health risk as a few of them told me. This impacted on us financially and my poor wife [GRO-B] who was going to retire at the time, couldn't.
8. After enjoying a good life and a moderately healthy lifestyle. I was now depressed and I wanted to die. I remember calling my social worker telling her I wanted to cut my wrists. She was very good and talked me out of it. I often get suicidal thoughts even though I am cleared of the infection, I think it will come back and I will die of it like my brother [B2] did.
9. I told a few of my friends about it and they dropped me. This left me feeling dirty and isolated. It wasn't even my fault but the stigma of getting something like this was met with ignorance. It has made me feel like a social outcast as most people do not understand. It has also made me feel I cannot discuss this with anyone.
10. I worry about my brother [B1] as he too was diagnosed with hepatitis C around the same time as me. The worse thing happened to our other brother [B2] dying from this infection and I worry I may lose my other brother. I have my own anxieties to contend with in terms of my own illness but this doesn't stop me from worrying about my brother.

6. Treatment/Care/Support

ANONYMOUS

1. I wasn't offered any support or counselling at the time of being diagnosed. I think if I had been offered counselling in how to manage this infection, I doubt I would be suffering with depression now. The only information offered was not to share my razor. I was informed of my diagnosis in a clinical manner and felt there was little empathy for me.
2. After a few years of being diagnosed I was offered the Interferon treatment. As stated previously I suffered the most severe side effects and it was decided that I should be taken off it. Luckily, I was cleared of the infection but I do worry it may come back. I have regular blood tests to monitor this.

7. Financial Assistance

1. I have received £20,000 from the Skipton fund and have quarterly payments of £1,000 from B50. This is totally inadequate as I have lost my business.
2. I now claim Disability Living Allowance.

8. Other Issues

1. Whilst I am grateful I have been cleared of the disease I am constantly worried it may come back. I have other health issues I suffer with such as heart problems, severe arthritis and this means I take numerous medications to control this.
2. I note from my medical records that hepatitis C was mentioned back in 1997. I am unsure as to when my deceased brother was told of his infection, if he was told at all, but why wait until after my brother B2 had died to screen me for this? If I had known sooner, I may have been some comfort to him.

ANONYMOUS

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.

GRO-B

Dated 19.03.19