

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN2757001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: March 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

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I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B of GRO-B  
GRO-B I was born on GRO-B I currently live with my husband and I work as a member of the cabin crew for GRO-B
2. I make this statement in relation to GRO-B: M my late mother who was born on GRO-B and passed away on GRO-B aged 75.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late mother's full medical records. I have been informed by the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) in Newcastle upon Tyne that her records have been destroyed.

### Section 2. How infected

4. My mother was infected with contaminated blood following several blood transfusions which took place between 1968 and 1973 at the RVI. During that

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period, she had numerous operations including a caesarean (during my birth), removal of ovaries and fallopian tubes and miscarriages. My mother was never informed of any risk that the blood products she was receiving were contaminated.

5. My mother was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated blood. One morning in 2002, she woke up with a clawed hand. Consequently, my sister and I took her to our GP after which they conducted some blood tests. On discussing the results, the doctor asked my mother, "Have you ever been bright yellow, because you have Hepatitis C."
6. No information or advice was given at that consultation to understand and manage the disease. I do believe that my mother should have been tested and informed earlier; specifically from the second that the NHS and Government suspected that the blood they had transfused into patients was at risk of contamination. They should have had an investigation into exactly which families were impacted by it and should therefore have responded sooner.
7. My mother and my family were all extremely upset and shocked at the manner in which we were told about the infection which ruined our lives. There was no compassion or empathy in the tone of the doctor and he did very little to help us. No member of my family was told anything at all and so we had unknowingly been at risk for years. Even after finding out, the risk of transmission was never discussed.
8. When she was diagnosed, no one was told that her Hepatitis C may lead onto liver cancer, and instead they kept an eye on her through routine blood tests. Somewhere in between, my mother went for a CT scan and through that they discovered lesions on her liver. My mother was then diagnosed with liver cancer and was treated at the Freeman Hospital. This was about eighteen months after her initial diagnosis.

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9. On my mothers death certificate it states the cause of death as Hepatocellular Cancer and Hepatitis C.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

10. I do not know if my mother had any other infection aside from that discussed above.

### **Section 4. Consent**

11. I believe that my mother was tested without her knowledge or consent and without being given full or adequate information.
12. I accompanied my mother to the GP and prior to her being diagnosed with Hepatitis C, we did not know the reason for her blood tests. We certainly did not contemplate that it was for Hepatitis C as we were never told. When it was eventually diagnosed, it came as a massive shock.
13. In terms of treatment, my mother only had radiotherapy for her liver cancer at the Freeman Hospital and as far as I am aware she was never treated for Hepatitis C.
14. I cannot say if she was tested for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

15. For as long as I can remember, prior to my mother's diagnosis she suffered from incapacitating fatigue, depression and anxiety never knowing what the cause of it was. After her diagnosis, she was embarrassed and felt extremely ashamed and angry. On top of her arthritis, coping with Hepatitis C was difficult for her.

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16. My mother underwent radiotherapy towards the end of her life. I do not believe any other treatment was offered to her nor was it ever discussed. None of us knew what was available for treatment at the time and so I cannot say whether there was treatment she ought to have been offered.
17. For my mother it was a physically and mentally draining illness to endure. She was also very frightened and was aware that there was a huge stigma attached to it. She was always anxious and had extremely volatile mood swings. Sometimes she would be physically unable to get out of bed.
18. Her relationship with my father suffered as she could not socialise or go out and even day to day life was sometimes too much for her. Eventually my father left as he could not take any more and was unable to cope. Her relationship with her children also suffered as she was unable to engage fully as a mother, something that traumatised her towards the end of her life.
19. When my mother was alive, I spent my life as her carer. My feelings about this have ranged from sadness and depression to anger and resentment. As children we had to do everything for her, as her fatigue was debilitating. We had to do all the cooking, cleaning, shopping and washing and generally to care for her well being, quite often being kept off school to do these chores. I always had to put my mother's needs before my own and could never have a normal life. As a result, I was never able to form a lasting relationship as I was never able to fully commit. Ultimately, my mother was my priority. I was therefore never able to have my own children. By the time my mother died and I met my current husband I was too old to have them.
20. Our previous friends no longer wanted anything to do with our family and we were constantly gossiped about. Comments from friends and some family members tended to be along the lines of "Well she must have led a bad lifestyle" and "I've got no sympathy; she brought it on herself". This made me so angry because it was not true. Such was the ignorance of people. We expected people to be more sympathetic. Even my own uncle was

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unsupportive. I considered him to be an intelligent man and he was always involved in Cancer campaigns, yet upon hearing that my mother had Hepatitis C, he showed no sympathy whatsoever as this was a stigmatised disease. My mother's friends also abandoned her. My sister had similar experiences to myself, but she left home at a young age and married.

21. As I had to stay near my mother, I could not leave the area to go to university and then pursue a career. I had accepted a place at Liverpool University, but I had to return after six months of enrolling as my mother threatened to kill herself. I eventually went to Newcastle University and studied Spanish and Politics.

22. Financially, as my mother could not work, money was always scarce, and with the departure of my father, I had to work extra jobs for mine and my mother's expenses. I ended up accumulating debts in attempts to support myself and my mother from a very young age.

23. I feel guilty now as I was so upset at the time. All my life I resented her and I used to get so angry with my mother due to the fact that I could never have a life of my own, but now I feel that I can understand why she reacted that way. Everything that happened to her was just so wrong. As my sister married young and left the house, the burden fell to me to look after our mother, and my sister to this date feels guilty about that. Despite everything that happened, we are both very close.

### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

24. My mother never received any support from anyone other than me and my sister and no counselling was ever made available to any of us in consequence of what happened.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

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25. The doctor at the Freeman Hospital told my mother that she was entitled to financial support due to being infected by contaminated blood. Therefore the doctor, my sister and I filled out the application forms for assistance from the Skipton Fund. My mother received £20,000 initially and a further payment of £25,000. I believe that the amount of financial assistance was paltry and an insult to the destruction of a life and the lives of those surrounding my mother.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

26. I am angry that this happened in the first place. Since the late 1800s there has been documentation available informing us about cross infection. Even in the 1970's, it could not possibly be a massive shock to them that taking blood from drug users and prisoners was not safe. It was well known, even then, that drug users are more susceptible to disease so I cannot understand how the authorities responsible can defend themselves by saying that they did not know the risks. How can they possibly say that the information was not available when historically it was? They claim nobody could be put at fault, but I beg to differ. They had always known the risk and chose to knowingly ignore it and in doing so risked the lives of several thousands of people.

### **Anonymity**

27. I do wish to remain anonymous and I do not want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed...

GRO-B

Dated

28.03.19.