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Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No.: WITN5751001
Exhibits: None
Dated:

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

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1955. I reside in Essex and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired Social Worker. I intend to speak about my mother, GRO-B: M who became infected with hepatitis C through infected blood. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment received and the impact it had on her and our family.

Section 2. How Affected

2. My mother was born on GRO-B 1936. She died on GRO-B 2007 from the effects of hepatitis C, which she acquired as a result of being treated with infected blood during routine surgery in the 1980s.
3. My mother and father got married in around GRO-B in GRO-B. I was born in GRO-B and I am the oldest of three children. I shared a birthday with my mother, and since my mother's passing, I do not celebrate, which upsets my wife and children.
4. My father was a teacher and came to the UK in 1963 in order to pursue a career in teaching here. My mother, sister GRO-B and I travelled by ship to India, later joining my father in the UK in 1966. My youngest brother GRO-B was born on GRO-B 1957 in Barking hospital.

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5. We lived in one room in a shared house for several months, but my father was determined to buy his own place. He was eventually able to secure a mortgage on a property in GRO-B Essex, where my family has been based ever since.
6. My sister GRO-B currently lives in GRO-B and my brother GRO-B lives in the house that my father purchased in the 1960s. In 1990, when my wife and I were newly married, we purchased the house next door to my parents' house and we still reside there.
7. I worked at an International Bank, before pursuing a career in local government. In 2008, I completed my Masters degree and qualified as a social worker. I stopped working in GRO-B 2020, one week before my father died.
8. In around 1987, over a period of time my mother complained about constantly being tired and her health deteriorated and she was diagnosed with Hepatitis C till she felt extremely ill and was admitted to hospital. I am unsure of the timeline. My sister was involved with my mother's appointments and medical care as she was her only daughter. Traditionally mothers confide in their daughters and not sons.
9. For a long time, she did not show any signs or symptoms of the virus, and she wasn't diagnosed with hepatitis C until many years later. However I am unsure of the exact timeline. My brother was living at home and had more involvement with my mother's appointments and medical care. Furthermore my mother is likely to have confided more in my sister as, being her only daughter, they were very close. Therefore my brother and sister are likely to be better placed to provide these details.
10. I remember my mother started to complain of feeling tired a lot. Prior to this she had been very active. Her stomach also became increasingly distended. Being a very determined woman, she tried to carry on as much as possible with very little complaint.
11. I can recall the first time I witnessed my mother vomiting blood. We were sitting in her sitting room and she said she felt sick. I held bucket under her chin and she vomited blood. It was very disturbing. We immediately called an ambulance. While we were waiting, my mother was lying in the sitting room, her stomach was huge, like a whale.
12. When the ambulance crew arrived, I remember them looking at each other. My mother was then taken to hospital. We were unsure what the issue was at this point.
13. My mother was admitted to hospital and it became clear it was something serious. I think at some point during my mother's time in hospital, we were called into a meeting room with a young consultant. He said that she had

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cirrhosis of the liver and they think she had hepatitis C. She was given a very bleak prognosis of not more than 12 months. Looking back, the way this news was delivered was very insensitive, it was just blurted out.

14. I didn't want to question anything at the time, I was still digesting the information being given to me. We were left totally in the dark about where she got it. I don't recall being asked questions about where she got it, and I can't remember there being any connection made between her blood transfusion. I don't know if my mother was ever told she had contracted hepatitis C from her blood transfusion.
15. My wife GRO-B spent some nights in the hospital with her. GRO-B recalls there was a shortage of nurses, and that she would clean my mother herself. It was very distressing.
16. There were other people in the ward who had hepatitis, and it was actually from another patient that we received the most information about hepatitis in the first instance. We did not know much at all about hepatitis at that point, so it was very scary to find information out that way.
17. Because of my mother's determined nature she lived for a few years after her diagnosis, but the effect of it was like a timebomb. We remained hopeful, and to some extent, in denial, but she had been given a death sentence. Right until the day she died we were hoping for a cure, we felt there was always wishful thinking.

Section 3. Other Infections

18. I do not believe that my mother contracted any infections apart from hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

19. I do not believe my mother was given any information or advice in relation to the risks of infection from blood transfusion.
20. I am sure my mother would not have consented to the transfusion if she had been told of the risks. Whilst my mother was not medically trained, her father was a doctor and my mother had a very analytical brain and would have weighed up the benefits and risks, and I believe would not have taken that risk. After she was diagnosed with Hepatitis C her diabetes worsened and she was particularly careful about her insulin and her diet.

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Section 5. Impact

21. My mother's life was impacted in many ways as a result of her infection with hepatitis C. Although she was not a quitter, her quality of life hugely impacted upon, and the infection affected her physically and emotionally.
22. She started to regularly say she was feeling tired but she was a woman who would not give up easily. She was a very stoic lady, who did not want to remind herself or family of her hepatitis C, so she would therefore try to carry on as she had been, as much as possible. However, her life was undoubtedly severely impacted as a result of her hepatitis C infection.
23. My mother had some other long-term health issues, including angina and diabetes. Her diabetes was undoubtedly exacerbated as a result of her HCV. Prior to her infection, she was able to control it by diet. She closely monitored her blood sugar levels and was very disciplined with the amount she ate.
24. However, as a result of the hepatitis C, her insulin dosage went up and up.
25. My mother was a very loving and caring person. She loved nature and animals. She loved gardening and her pets. My wife GRO-B says she married me partly because of how loving my mother was, she knew this was a priority for her because she had lost her own father. She had met my mother before we met.
26. When my mother was alive, her house was like an open house. We always had lots of visitors. Lots of women her age in the locality would come and sit and chat and knit etc. My mother was always cooking for people, she was an excellent cook. People would come at lunchtime, dinnertime, and my mother was always making food but she never complained. She was a very sociable and popular lady who was loved by everyone. However as time passed my mother discouraged visitors as she could not cope physically.
27. My mother was very careful in respect of taking precautions to avoiding spreading Hepatitis C. For example, she ensured her towels and toothbrush were kept separate, and she kept her plate and cutlery separate. Following her diagnosis of Hepatitis we do not know what advice she was given. My mother was very particular about ensuring our safety. She was like a tiger with her cubs in that respect.
28. My mother was very sensible and careful, for example there was an occasion when I helped her with some glass in her foot. The glass had cut her foot and made it bleed, and she made sure I was very careful and that I went to be tested for Hepatitis C afterwards.
29. She was a quiet person, unassuming and very softly spoken. When she spoke, it was like flowers were falling from her mouth. She was a good listener and very hardworking. She never complained and just liked to get on with life as much as possible.

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30. I have two sons, GRO-B and GRO-B and both were close to my parents. We lived in the house next door to my parents and each night at bedtime GRO-B who had a very special bond with my mother would not go to bed until they had bid each other good night in a particular way - by knocking on the adjoining bedroom windows. This was despite wishing each other earlier in the evening. My sons would be looked after by my mother after they were picked up from school by either of my parents, which affected them tremendously after her death - as they came to an "empty home", since my father was grieving.
31. My wife and I had originally wanted to have four children, but we decided not to have more after my younger son because of not wanting to rely on my mother due to her ill health. We knew she would have been very upset if our children went to childcare, so we made the decision not to have any more children.
32. My mother had a wonderful way with her grandchildren and others. For example, she would make toast and special snacks for her grandchildren and their friends after school and they would go there every day before coming home. My sons would tell my wife she couldn't make food like grandma and would not come home if my wife came back home early from work, before visiting their grandmother first.
33. When GRO-B was 10, he initially declined to sit his 11 plus as he knew his grandma was in hospital and he was emotionally distraught. He was persuaded with great difficulty to sit his exams - which he thankfully passed. Her death affected him greatly and changed his personality. He was, and still is, a sweet and loving boy but he has lost a lot of confidence. He became quiet, subdued and very clingy to his mother GRO-B and he still finds it difficult speaking about her death.
34. He also lost a patch of his hair and GRO-B as a result of stress in relation to my mother's illness and death. My mother's passing has a profound and long-lasting effect on her grandchildren.
35. She was still relatively young when she passed away, she was around 70 years old. She still had a lot to look forward to in her life. She wanted to travel and go on nice holidays, she wanted to be around for her family. This is something we have all missed out on greatly. It makes me very sad that my children missed out on having their grandmother in their lives for longer, in particular.
36. We didn't really speak openly about the hepatitis C amongst our family, or with my father or our children. We tended to just accept it as a thing that happened. We also did not want to increase the distress associated with it.
37. My father was a very educated man. He understood the implications of my mother's infection, however he was devastated after her death. He had worshipped the ground she walked on.

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38. When my mother died, around 120 people crammed into the house for a prayer meeting and to pay their respects.
39. However after my mother died, people stopped visiting as much, so my father became more isolated. The house which had had such a lively atmosphere when my mother was alive, became dead.
40. My father's physical health deteriorated significantly after my mother died. He had to have a quadruple bypass operation, developed Bells Palsy and had pneumonia, and was subsequently diagnosed with prostate cancer, from which he was able to make a full recovery.
41. My father tried not to dwell on it but he would say he missed her a lot, and he would tell us he was feeling depressed. We tried to ensure he wasn't left alone too much. He was able to find some solace in religion, this was his main coping strategy. But the love he and my mother had enjoyed was an old-fashioned type of love, it was always there. It was like his right arm was cut off when she died.
42. My mother was the rock of the family. She held us all together. My father worked and was the breadwinner and my mother managed the finances and household budget. My mother was like the book keeper, chef, she did everything, while my father worked hard and earned a living to keep a roof over their heads. They simply worked really well as a couple.
43. My mother imparted a lot of values onto her children and grandchildren. She doted on us and them and she was wonderful with her grandchildren. She was the matriarch of the family, and I believe our family would be very different if she were still alive. I believe my father would have had a better quality of life and been better cared for, as the last few years of his life were difficult and I was concerned about his welfare at times. I also believe my children would have been happier as individuals.
44. My mother was a housewife for most of her adult life, although she did work for a short time at an electrical company. She enjoyed this as it offered her the chance of a life outside the family. However due to her having to work night shifts, the family were worried for her safety and the eventually stopped this work. Therefore her hepatitis C didn't really have an impact on her ability to work as she had already stopped working some time prior.
45. She couldn't go out as much, it curtailed her social gatherings both inside and outside the home. She couldn't go for walks like she used to enjoy, she'd become breathless and tired easily, she did not want to remind herself or the family of the hepatitis C and wanted to carry on as she had done in the past.
46. Not long before my mother died, there was a gathering at a friend's house who was dying of cancer. My mother said she didn't want to go but she told us to tell the friend she'd meet her later. My mother knew at this point that she

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didn't have much longer to live but she remained very dignified in her approach and discouraged people from visiting her.

47. When she was ill and in hospital, I would visit her in hospital which I found very difficult. I was in the middle of studying for my master's in social work. My mother passed away before I completed my degree.
48. My mother passed away in King George Hospital. She was just over 70 when she died. She had so much more she wanted to do. She wanted to travel and go on holidays. She wanted to be around to love and care for her family and to see her grandchildren grow up and succeed in life and see GRO-B married.
49. We didn't really tell anyone outside the family about her hepatitis C until after she passed away. We didn't even tend to talk about it with each other. I might have discussed with some people who had a medical background to gain an insight into her illness. We did not inform friends and family as we feared we would have become ostracised within the community

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

50. My sister GRO-B was more involved with my mother's medical care, phone calls and appointments as my brother GRO-B was involved in seeking financial compensation. They are better placed than me to questions about this.
51. I do not believe that my mother was given any information or advice regarding the risk of exposure to hepatitis C or any other infections as a result of receiving a blood transfusion.
52. We were told that it would not be possible for my mother's hepatitis C to be treated as all the treatment options were too risky. We did pursue the possibility of a liver transplant, but we were told she would not survive the operation because the hepatitis C was too advanced and also because she had other conditions including angina and diabetes.
53. My mother had frequent hospital appointments, and good consultants in charge of her treatment for other conditions, including her diabetes and sciatica.
54. I do not recall any counselling being offered to my mother or father or to the rest of the family. I believe this would have been beneficial especially for my father and my youngest son, particularly.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

55. My wife [GRO-B] saw a small article in a newspaper, which she showed my brother, and I understand he made some enquiries off the back of this. It is likely that this may have prompted an application for financial support, and an application was subsequently made to the Skipton fund. I do not know details of any compensation applied for or paid.
56. My father did receive a lump sum. But I did not know this. My brother [GRO-B] was involved with the financial side of things but there has never been any transparency from him regarding the finances.
57. I understand some money was received some time after my mother died. I believe financial support should have been given to my mother while she was alive, so that it could have been of benefit to her.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____

[GRO-B]

Dated _____

19/8/21