

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No. WITN6475002

Exhibits:

Dated: 15.7.2022

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 15 July 2021

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1: Introduction

1. This statement is provided in addition to my earlier statement. Since I gave my original statement my circumstances have changed. I have slowly realised that the impact of the infected blood inquiry has made me reflect on my own circumstances along with the impact this has had on not only me as a person but also my wife and wider family.

Section 2: Discovery through the inquiry

2. I was always under the strong belief that there were a number of Haemophiliacs infected through their paediatric care in Aberdeen. Based on the evidence that the inquiry presented about the relevant Haemophilia centres and number of known infected, the paediatric number of Aberdeen I believe was 1, and that would have been me alone. To discover this information, based on my understanding of the evidence from the inquiry, that I was the only child infected with Hepatitis C who attended Aberdeen Royal Infirmary was not only a revelation but a revelation that left

me extremely upset. It is once again, like many of the others infected or affected, a piece of a puzzle that was never explained to me or my family.

3. Whenever my family had asked the question over the years from my initial diagnosis in 1987 and subsequently over the years, 'were there any other children infected' the go to response was 'we can't say or give out that information - it's confidential'. My parents had lived with a collective guilt that they believed there were other parents in Aberdeen going through what they went through when in fact, as I say based on my interpretation of the evidence from the inquiry, we were the only family who attended the paediatric hospital for my Haemophilia who ended up with a child being infected. When I revealed this to my folks they were both visibly upset as both for a number of decades believed there were other families of infected Haemophiliacs impacted.
4. Having spoken openly with my parents since this initial discussion and revelation, they have both been clearly impacted by a new sense of guilt, something that I did not foresee. I guess when you believe there are other people there is a collective sense of guilt, responsibility, suffering that parents of those children infected in some way feel is shared amongst them. Strangers who do not know each other nor have met but I guess have a shared grief or guilt 'we're not alone, there are others, it's not just us'. I have no doubt my parents and their feelings of guilt have been compounded further by this discovery. Once again the legacy of what happened to me as a child continues to cause upset, anger and trauma 35 years later for my family and I.

Section 3: Treatment

5. I only recently discovered that the use of Interferon treatment can lead to infertility. I've found this revelation extremely upsetting as I do not believe at the time I started my treatment it was made clear to me in no uncertain terms this was a potential long-term side effect of treatment. I mentioned this to my wife and she was crystal clear if I had been informed of this potential side-effect then I may have had second thoughts about the recombinant interferon treatment or at least we would have definitely weighed this up before committing to my treatment.
6. However at the time we were both acutely aware that under no circumstances during my treatment, and at least a minimum of 2 years post-treatment, should we try to conceive a baby. I was told that there would be a high possibility that conceiving a child whilst on treatment and post-treatment that a baby would be born with a variety of health and development issues. Needless to say this was a on-going fear that my

wife and I shared throughout my treatment, and post-treatment that under no circumstance should we have unprotected sex.

7. Having only discovered infertility can be a temporary or long-term side-effect, I am now under the belief that I may have been left partly infertile based on the fact it took my wife over two years to conceive a baby having completed my recombinant interferon treatment in 2009, we waited until the end of 2012 before we felt it was safe to try and start a family, 4 years after we were married. However when we did conceive a child in 2014, unfortunately my wife suffered a miss-carriage. When we went for our initial 3 month scan the baby hadn't formed properly. My wife spent the next 4 weeks with bleeding issues until she went to her GP for a check-up. What the doctor found shocked her that there was a blockage and my wife was immediately referred to the hospital. This was around March 2014.
8. Once at the maternity unit my wife was inspected and asked to take a pregnancy test again. The test was still positive, which the midwife said was impossible. My wife and I were left in the treatment room for a few minutes before the midwife returned and informed us that the 'genetic material' was still inside of [GRO-B] and that the midwife would have to remove the plug so her body could eject the material naturally.
9. The next bit I only found out a few weeks ago after my wife [GRO-B] opened up. As you would imagine we were both extremely upset. We'd thought we'd lost our baby and for the previous 4 weeks [GRO-B] had been going through what we thought was a natural process of what happens during a miscarriage. Not only were we just informed that what was left of the pregnancy was still inside [GRO-B] but we both had to witness the midwife removing what was described as 'genetic material' and pop it on a silver tray before covering it up and leaving us in the room with what was to us our child. I left the room for a few minutes to compose myself whilst [GRO-B] spoke with the nurse.
10. Unbeknown to me she asked the midwife if my treatment for my Hepatitis C maybe had anything to do with us losing the baby. The midwife replied that 'it would be impossible to know for sure, it maybe had something to do with it, but don't worry the positive is at least you can get pregnant'. I was unaware of this discussion as [GRO-B] didn't want to upset me having just lost a baby. I feel extremely guilty and upset that felt she had to keep this discussion to herself as she wanted to protect me.
11. I feel a lot of guilt that we had put our plans to start a family on hold after we got married, more so for my wife who was desperate to start a family. I live with these

feelings of regret and anger and more so now knowing that my treatment could have been the cause of us taking so long to get pregnant and the fact she had to protect me from what was said by the midwife.

Section 4: Circumstances

12. Since I gave my original statement I have found myself more upset, anxious and to be honest feel there's a dark cloud hanging over me. I don't believe this is because I gave a statement, I've felt like this for a number of years, but more so I have never, ever had the opportunity to tell my story to anyone so in a way it was both therapeutic but has also made me realise I have a lot of mental health issues that I've kept buried for a number of years.
13. At the start of 2022 I made the tough decision to close my graphic design business as I felt I was no longer able to service my clients as my focus, energy and ability to concentrate that was needed to my job was lacking. I am certain my moments of 'brain fog' and general wellbeing in terms of my mental health are now more impacted then ever as I realise the severity of what being someone who was infected has meant. And although I am now Hep C free, which I am extremely grateful of, the legacy of being someone who was infected doesn't go away.
14. I'd worked extremely hard to build a successful business working with some amazing clients but to be honest even before the pandemic I felt more anxious about work. Felt a lack of confidence and struggled to focus my time and complete tasks. I'm proud I was in a position to close my business with no outstanding debit in the business and all accounts were settled but I was also heartbroken after spending 11 or so years working countless hours doing something I love.
15. I was raised with a good work ethic to work hard, do a good job and support your family. I'm in a worse place mentally and financially now, however I have been moved to HCV Stage 2 (Severely Affected) with SIBBS so I hope this additional financial support can help off-set my financial situation. With two young children, a wife, a mortgage and other bills I've always been aware of the responsibilities I have to my wife and kids, I guess it's what any parent does is make sure they can be there for their family. Supporting them when times are hard or in times of hurt, and also financially. Having to close my business was an extremely tough decision but for the sake of my reputation with my clients and in the world of graphic design and

advertising it was the most sensible decision I could make based on how I am feeling and my ability to do my job and run my business.

16. I'm now working part-time for my wife helping her grow her business. This new position affords me the days or time off I need to manage my mental health. I am also now speaking with a counsellor after I referred myself to the Scottish Infected Blood Physiological service. I've found this another avenue where I've been able to talk through how I'm feeling and what mental health issues I'm suffering from. I don't believe that I will ever fully realise my self-worth or have a lot of confidence in myself, but I hope speaking with a professional will maybe provide me with some answers and in turn some ways of processing my emotions so I'm better placed to manage my day to day life. I feel sometimes my wife and kids have to suffer my mood swings which is unfair and I feel a lot of guilt that one minute I can be fine and should be happy, and the next I'm withdrawn, angry or upset. Often for no reason or over something trivial.

17. I have also been in touch with other people infected or affected through the Scottish Infected Blood Forum, who invited me to take part in their weekly Zoom calls. I've found these calls both enlightening and upsetting having never had anyone outside with my immediate family to talk with. In particular being able to talk with other people who were infected has really opened my eyes to the impact being infected has had on not only my own life, but also the many, many lives of the others infected that I've had the pleasure to meet and chat with.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated 15.7.2022

