

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN5300001

Exhibits: WITN5300002

Dated: 21 May 2021

**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 February 2021.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

**Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B 1940 and my address is GRO-B  
I am married. I married my husband GRO-B in 1962.  
Together we have three children, GRO-B  
GRO-B and GRO-B I am a grandmother and a great-grandmother. I am retired. Prior to this, I worked in dental health.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV) contracted following three blood transfusions received between 1968 and 1978. In particular, I intend to discuss how the illness affected me and continues to affect myself, my family and our lives together.

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3. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. I can confirm that my family and I do wish to seek anonymity.
4. The Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and I understand that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
5. I wish to acknowledge that as time passes, memories can fade. I have been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However, these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates.
6. I would also like to highlight that upon a request to Hairmyres Hospital a few months ago, I was provided with my full medical records on a CD Rom marked 'Hairmyres Hospital Health Records' [GRO-B] [GRO-B]. Due to the sheer extent of the records alongside my failing eyesight, I have not been able to examine these. My daughter [GRO-B] has been able to survey the transfusion records which highlight the dates of transfusion together with my subsequent diagnosis with Hepatitis C. The Infected Blood Inquiry has my authority to review the content of this disc, which I exhibit as **WITN5300002**.

### **Section 2. How Infected**

7. I was born on [GRO-B] 1940. I grew up in Lanarkshire. As a young girl, I was fit and healthy. I didn't suffer with any health problems. I enjoyed dancing, tennis and golf. My sister and I used to go to dance classes up to four times a week.
8. When I was 21, I married my husband [GRO-B] We bought a two bedroom flat in the south side of Glasgow. Our daughter [GRO-B] was born in 1963, the year after [GRO-B] and I married. I was in labour for 10

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hours. [GRO-B] was born in 1966. It was a difficult birth and I was in labour for 36 hours.

9. When he was a baby, he suffered from asthma. The doctor advised us to get away from the city. My husband [GRO-B] was teaching at the college. They asked if anyone wanted a house in [GRO-B]. So, in December 1967 we sold the flat and moved to [GRO-B] where we rented for two years before buying a house. From the day we moved here, young [GRO-B] asthma ceased.
10. [GRO-B] was born on [GRO-B] 1968 at [GRO-B] Hospital in [GRO-B]. Prior to [GRO-B] birth, we were assured that the labour wouldn't be as long and painful as my previous experiences. I didn't experience pain but I was in labour for a long time. I haemorrhaged before and after the birth. I awoke with tubes down my throat. I was also being given a blood transfusion. I remember asking the nurse if I was going to be okay. Initially she didn't respond, then she reassured me that I was going to be alright. I nearly died.
11. A couple of years later, between 1970 and 1971, I experienced problems again. It was recommended that I do not have any more children. I was admitted into Hairmyres Hospital for a sterilisation. At this point, I was extremely thin. They tied my fallopian tubes off but left me with one ovary. The matron was mortified because the procedure left a big scar. I don't know if I was given blood but I was later told that this would have been expected for an operation of this nature.
12. Up until then, I bounced back very quickly from childbirth but I never really recovered after the birth of [GRO-B] and the subsequent sterilisation. I began to suffer with severe pain in my joints. The doctor sent me to the Rheumatologist at Hairmyres. I was required to take tablets for what was diagnosed as Rheumatoid Arthritis.
13. A year or so later, between 1974 and 1975, I started to haemorrhage for a second time, this was linked to my periods for which I was

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referred for another blood transfusion. I can remember that when I raised my hands, the doctor noted that he could see right through them. I was very anaemic. I was given the blood and a D&C at Hairmyres Hospital.

14. Between 1977 and 1978, I had a hysterectomy for which I was given a third blood transfusion, again at Hairmyres.
15. By this point, I had three young children. It was in the 1980s when I really started to hit rock bottom. I was extremely tired and fatigued with severe joint pain. This has continued to this day. Sometimes GRO-B my husband has to help me into bed because the pain is so acute.
16. Over the years, I was in and out of hospital with various illnesses. I was given so many different diagnoses including for MS, ME and then Rheumatoid Arthritis. However, I always felt that there was an underlying issue that was not being identified.
17. In around 2013, having been under the care of Rheumatologists for years, I was seen by a different Rheumatologist. He told me that he didn't think I had Rheumatoid Arthritis. He referred me to a Haematologist to run tests on my blood. I saw him in November 2013. I was initially given a lumbar puncture which was very painful. When this gave an ambiguous reading, the haematologist referred me for a bone marrow biopsy.
18. In January 2014, I returned to Hairmyres Hospital. My granddaughter, GRO-B accompanied me because GRO-B was still working at the time. He did not retire until he was 87. The consultant, Dr Lyndsay Mitchell informed me that I had Hepatitis C but that it had left my system. I was quite upset. I bumped into a friend in the Hospital who must have noticed that I was down as she later told another friend of ours that I must have received bad news at the hospital.



19. I just thought, what have I done to get this? The consultant asked if I had received blood transfusions in the past. I told her that I had. She said that the hospital would need to look into it. But that was it. She didn't explain a great deal more about the origins of the infection or how I had spontaneously cleared the virus. When I told GRO-B he just accepted it. I feel a bit ignorant in retrospect that both GRO-B and I just accepted the diagnosis and didn't investigate its nature or origins to a greater extent.
20. Whilst I cannot identify which was the contaminating operation or transfusion, I felt unwell after the birth of GRO-B in 1968. I never seemed to return to normal. I do not have tattoos, my ears were pierced in the late 1980's and this was done professionally after I had begun to feel so unwell. I cannot conceive of any other source of infection other than from one of the transfusions I received between 1968 and 1978.
21. When I spoke to GRO-B who worked as a nurse, she felt that the diagnosis explained a lot of question marks in my health that had been hanging over me for decades. She believed that the HCV was likely to be the cause of many of the illnesses that I had suffered with including periods of time where, for no explainable reason, I wasn't able to get out of bed in the morning.
22. I haven't seen Dr Mitchell for a long time as there are a number of different consultants at the hospital. I wasn't offered treatment at the the point of diagnosis, it seemed that my body had already cleared the virus. I merely returned for blood tests every six weeks for three years. I managed to keep my blood levels at a 10, which was reasonable, I believe this was assisted by managing to maintain a healthy diet.
23. Whilst I have been told that the virus is out of my system, every time I receive blood, I have to provide the nurse with a card to indicate that I have antibodies.

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

24. When I was tested for HCV, I was also tested for HIV, the result of which was negative.

### **Section 4. Consent**

25. Whilst I consented to the various medical procedures I underwent over the years, it was never explained to me beforehand that I might require blood nor the associated risks of viral infection. On the occasions in which I was provided with a blood transfusion, I was merely told that my blood was so low that this would be a necessary course of action. I just accepted what I was told.

### **Section 5. Impact**

26. My infection with HCV has had a significant impact on my life and the lives of my family. It has affected not only my marriage but also my children, my grandchildren and great grandchildren and as such has had ramifications over many generations.

27. As mentioned previously, growing up I was very fit and healthy. However, since the birth of GRO-B I have never been well. I have always been in and out of hospital with different illnesses. I was tired, lethargic and susceptible to any virus that was going around.

28. Sometime in the 1980s, my teeth became very brittle, for which I required incessant fillings. This was ironic because I was teaching dental health at the time. The doctors didn't attribute this to anything. I also recognised that this was unusual as my family have excellent teeth.

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29. My health was so poor at this point that I didn't have the energy for the procedures. I decided to have all my teeth removed so that dentures could be fitted. I was only in my thirties. I'd now love to get implants but I can't because I'm diabetic and my body is too weak to handle the anaesthetic. The only comfort I have over that is the fact that my husband made my teeth.
30. I contract chest infections frequently. At one point I was told that I had COPD. I demanded a test. My husband had it and I was convinced that I did not. The tests were negative. This is another example whereby the medical profession were in many ways guessing as to what was causing my symptoms.
31. At one point, my GP, who was a good friend, speculated that I might have MS. By this point I was already diagnosed with an underactive thyroid and diabetes. I was exasperated with the labels. It turned out that I didn't have MS. Then, in 1988, I was diagnosed with ME. Around this time, a lot of people were also being diagnosed with ME. I think this might have been another misdiagnosis for what later transpired to be HCV.
32. I would experience bouts of short-term memory loss which, at the time I attributed to the ME. I would be reading a book and be unable to remember what was on the page before. My concentration levels also suffered for periods of time. For a woman of 81 I think my memory is okay now, that said on occasions I still have memory lapses.
33. I now take a lot of medications. I have been diagnosed with high blood pressure and an underactive thyroid. I also regularly take water tablets, blood thinning tablets and beta blockers. This is in addition to the insulin I take for my type 1 diabetes. It's actually quite difficult to remember all the medications I have been on over the years. When GRO-B looked through my medical records, she gave up reading

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because they were so lengthy as I have been admitted to hospital on several occasions over the years with a plethora of illnesses.

34. My diabetes has caused me to lose my sight. I am now partially sighted and registered blind. I used to do a lot of knitting, crocheting and painting with watercolours which I can no longer enjoy because of my poor eye sight. I also made greeting cards. Nor can I read the newspaper or continue to drive, the latter of which I had to give this up when I noticed that I couldn't see the road signs anymore.

35. Around six years ago, in 2014 or so, I had my first heart attack. I was supposed to have a bypass, however, the consultant popped his head in to tell me that my heart would not withstand the procedure. I was placed in coronary care where I was given my first stent. Four weeks later, I was given the final four. The following month, I was diagnosed as partially sighted. I can recall these dates because my mum died in GRO-B 2014, aged 95.

36. I suffered a second heart attack in October 2020. I was rushed into A&E where I was resuscitated and given a stent. It was very nerve-racking. They gave me an injection of morphine. Friends would ask me how I dealt with the needles but, as a diabetic, I'm accustomed to them.

37. Normally when a stent is fitted, the patient is discharged the following day, however, I remained in hospital for between six and seven days. I was worried because the Covid rates were high at the time. Although I was in a room of my own, I could still hear the commotion regarding the virus all around me.

38. In the May of this year (2021) I suffered my 3<sup>rd</sup> heart attack. I was subsequently informed that I have a twisted artery in the middle of my heart I was told that nothing can be done to remedy the twisted artery however, I have been prescribed tablets which are supposed to help. I was also told that any operation would be the last resort.



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39. A few years ago, I saw my doctor because I was feeling quite weak. I was diagnosed with myelodysplasia. I was referred for a blood transfusion. I was transfused at intervals for six weeks. However, from December 2019 until right through October 2020, I didn't receive a transfusion. That's when the heart attack happened.
40. I am now transfused about once a month. Usually, I'm the type of person who tries to bounce back. I tend to feel quite good after the transfusion but I'm not feeling so great at the moment. This might also be because I'm getting older.
41. In addition to the conditions I have described I have suffered with itchy skin for years and this remains so to this day. I receive light treatment for this.
42. In 2019, I took ill again. I phoned the sister at the hospital and told her that I was feeling breathless. She told me to come to the hospital immediately. GRO-B accompanied me. I was given a strong intravenous antibiotic for seven days. I was really upset at the time because the staff were gowning up to come in and see me as were the visitors. At first, I thought there was something wrong with me. Then I was told that it was 'reverse barrier nursing', to protect me from outside infection because my immune system was so compromised and as a result I was especially prone to infection.
43. I used to love shopping when I was younger. Yet now, even doing a food shop is exhausting. I get tired and my eyesight isn't good enough. I also feel self-conscious because I have to take a magnifying glass with me and I don't like to draw attention to myself.
44. My ability to work has been affected by my poor health. Initially, I worked for my parent's GRO-B business before they gave the business up when my father died. Then, in the 1980s' I worked as a

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dental nurse educator for GRO-B. This involved travelling around Scotland and sometimes abroad. I had to give this up in 1987 shortly before my diagnosis with ME as I no longer had the energy to manage the job. I didn't work full-time again.

45. Whilst as a family we had sufficient income from GRO-B salary, I lost a degree of financial independence as a result of not being able to work. About 10 years ago, I began working as the secretary for the golf club on a part time basis. I was keen to take part as I thought it might keep my mind active. I didn't work for the salary; it only supplemented our income, but I enjoyed the work. I later had to give this up as my health declined.
46. Being infected with HCV has also had significant ramifications on my family life. As a mother, I didn't feel that I was doing the job properly. I feel that my children had to tolerate a mother with little to no energy. There would be periods of time where I would take to bed or would not be able to get up in the morning. At one point I hired a lady to come in four days a week to help with childcare and housework because I couldn't manage it.
47. I've never asked the children how they feel about my illnesses and subsequent diagnosis with HCV. Nevertheless, I must have done something right because my children are all very close to each other and me.
48. My marriage has undoubtedly been affected by my poor health over the years. As my health started to decline, GRO-B was lecturing at the college. He also worked part-time at the dental surgery during the evenings.
49. When he wasn't working, he would enjoy playing golf at the club. I had to make sure the children were doing their homework. I'm not decrying him now, but I certainly did at the time. I just felt as if he had given up on us. In hindsight, I realise that he hadn't, he was earning money. I

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think I was emotional because I was persistently feeling unwell for no explicable reason. I was exasperated that I didn't have the energy to manage my day-to-day responsibilities as a mother.

50. Fortunately, I have a very understanding and supportive husband who does all the cooking and has done for a long time. He has often joked that he married a female eight years his junior so that she would look after him in his old age, yet the opposite has happened.

51. My social life has been affected by my health problems GRO-B and I used to be avid golfers. We would spend weekends playing with other couples. I had to give that up around 10 years ago. I could play a couple of holes but I'd have to retire after that. I no longer have the energy nor the eyesight.

52. This year, Covid aside, we haven't booked any holidays. We didn't do anything last year either. In 2018, GRO-B and I went for a local cruise in Germany. At one point, I was walking down the corridor on the 8<sup>th</sup> floor. I felt dizzy and tired. When I got into my room, I collapsed onto the bed. GRO-B took my blood pressure but couldn't get a proper reading.

53. I was taken to hospital before being sent home to the UK. The doctor who saw me planned to send me home. As a precaution, he checked with the cardiologist who discovered fluid in my lung. I was admitted as an inpatient. I don't think I can go on any more cruises as my health stands at this present time.

54. Asides from my health, the travel insurance is too expensive. It was £500 just to get me on a drip in Germany. It would cost me over £1000 in travel insurance for a 10-day trip.

55. When I received my diagnosis, I was shocked that this could have happened. My main worry was my grandchildren's safety. I was worried that in all the years that I carried the virus without my knowledge, I could have infected them by mistake. Fortunately, I didn't

infect GRO-B because he was a regular blood donor and would have been informed. I was never able to give blood once I became a diabetic.

56. As my immune system is so compromised, I have always been susceptible to illness. The children and grandchildren can't even come near me because as soon as they leave, I'll end up with a cold. Of course, this isn't helped by the pandemic. GRO-B and I have been shielding. In fact, I reckon that I had Covid last January 2020. We had spent Christmas with the family at GRO-B house. By Boxing day, GRO-B and I were unwell with a terrible cough. It took us two months to recover. A few years ago, the haematologist advised me not to board a plane due to the risk of contracting an illness. Which goes to show that I am very susceptible to chest infections.

57. My children and grandchildren are all very supportive. We are a close-knit family. Yesterday was my 81st birthday. I received my regular blood transfusion. When I returned home, the family were all around including my great grandchildren and nephews. It was so kind and thoughtful of them but I was exhausted by the end of the visit. My mum lived to 95. I don't have high hopes that I am going to live as long. My life expectancy is not as my mother's was; another 14 years would be wishful thinking.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

58. I do not believe that I have been subjected to stigma as a result of my infection with Hepatitis C. I think I've been treated very well at Hairmyres. I discussed with my husband how I couldn't have expected better treatment if I was paying. I've always got a room of my own which is cleaned thoroughly every day. I think they are absolutely excellent.



59. Whilst I cannot complain about the quality of treatment since my diagnosis, I am more critical of a lack of treatment in the years preceding my diagnosis. I think my blood should have been scrutinised more rigorously and at an earlier point. When I was told that I had had HCV but had spontaneously cleared the virus in the past, I wondered for how long I had carried the infection. In all the years that I was told I had Rheumatoid Arthritis, MS and then ME, I question why Hepatitis was not investigated.

60. Up until a new Rheumatologist saw me in 2017, nobody prior to this sought to investigate the underlying issues with my health. This is despite persistent visits to the doctor and hospital over the last forty years. I felt exasperated that I was being handed diagnosis after diagnosis yet it always felt as if there was an underlying issue that was being overlooked. For decades, I never questioned my quality of life; I just tolerated having poor health.

61. I was only diagnosed with HCV seven years ago. Had I known about my infection years before, not only could I have sought treatment but I would have had a lot of answers that I had been missing. I could never understand why I felt so unwell.

62. Moreover, in the late 1980's the drug I was given for Rheumatoid Arthritis required blood tests which revealed elevated liver function. Following this, I was given a liver biopsy at Hairmyres Hospital, the result of which indicated that I had a 'fatty liver'. Yet, my liver function was not monitored again until 2017, not least any investigations into possible Hepatitis infection. To this day I have only ever been told that I have a "fatty liver"

63. When I was diagnosed with HCV, I was provided with two Macmillan nurses to contact for more information. They also gave me a booklet on myelodysplasia.

**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

64. Recently I've applied to SIBSS. GRO-B sent the forms to Dr. GRO-B to complete. I don't know what's happening with that GRO-B and I didn't want to get involved. It was GRO-B who encouraged us to apply. She emphasised that it was not my fault that I contracted the virus and that I should at the very least apply for some recompense.

**Section 8. Other Issues**

65. I have suffered with ill health for over forty years. I was frustrated that the cause could never be explained. Looking back, whilst I needed the blood that I was given, one would expect that it would be checked and screened beforehand. I took the hospitals that cared for me in trust. I felt shocked to discover that I had been given Hepatitis C. This should never have happened.

66. Receiving contaminated blood has had a massive impact not just on myself but on several generations. Having not been diagnosed for many years, I not only exposed my husband and children to the risk of infection but my grandchildren too. This is a situation, which should have never been allowed to happen.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-B

GRO-B

Dated

21.5.2021