

ANONYMITY

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN2948001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: September 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B GRO-B
GRO-B GRO-B I live with my partner
and have GRO-B children aged GRO-B I currently work for the GRO-B
2. I prepare this statement in relation to my late father, GRO-B
GRO-B and GRO-B
GRO-B as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.
3. This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my
late father's medical records.

Section 2. How infected

4. My earliest memories of my father are from around the age of three or four.
We did all the normal father-son activities you could imagine and remained
very much active when he was able to partake in physical engagements, such
as football and playing on the swings.

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5. However this changed very quickly in conjunction with my father's rapidly declining health. The activities began to dwindle and ultimately cease. He wasn't even able to walk to the car without becoming tired.
6. My father suffered from Hypogammaglobulinemia, an immune disorder that leaves you unable to create white blood cells. I believe he was diagnosed in [GRO-B]. In order to treat my father's condition, he was given blood products in the form of plasma.
7. He would usually attend the [GRO-B], but was also treated at [GRO-B] and another in [GRO-B] the reasons for which are unknown to me. My mother has also made me aware that he attended [GRO-B] [GRO-B] however I know the [GRO-B] was where he received the majority of his care.
8. We moved when my mother fell pregnant with my sister in the late [GRO-B]'s and this was when things started to get much worse. I was probably around [GRO-B] years old at this point. My father had to give up work and became a stay at home dad. Eventually he became bedridden.
9. He was only around [GRO-B] years old at the time and as his health steadily got worse, my mother became his carer. My younger sister was then born, but as a result, there was no parental time for us. We could never do anything together after my father's health started to decline. We couldn't live a normal family life anymore. I remember days when I would come home from primary school and my father would be in bed. He would lay there for days on end. If we ever came home to him on the sofa or armchair it would be a 'wow' day. It was very difficult to deal with all of this as a child.
10. The doctor who regularly came to see us was called [GRO-B]. He came from what is now called the [GRO-B]. He would visit us quite frequently, once, sometimes twice a week. I also remember going to his surgery a few times, although this was very rare. We built a rapport and a relationship because he was a very kind man.

11. [GRO-B] would bring colourful boxes full of 'plasma' for my father. There would be so many boxes I would use them as garages for my matchbox cars; I recall having yellow, blue and pink garages to play with.
12. From a very young age, I was made aware of the conditions my father was living with. I was around seven years old when my parents and grandparents taught me about 'red and white blood cells' and that my father couldn't produce white cells anymore so he required 'special medication.'
13. I have a vivid memory of being sat on the bed playing cards with my father and [GRO-B] about to inject my father with treatment. On this occasion he said, 'the thing is [GRO-B] without this plasma you will die. You won't be able to live.' I remember this because it scared me. I thought my dad was going to die. I can't recall what my father had asked [GRO-B] but it must have been something along the lines of, 'how much do I really need this?' I was always told the injections were to top up white blood cells because his own body couldn't do it. [GRO-B] was constructively blunt and told my father he would die and that there was no other alternative. My father said to me 'this will make me better [GRO-B]'. We would actively encourage my father to receive this plasma as a result.
14. A doctor once told my parents that he suspected Hepatitis may have caused my father's ill health. As such my mother asked the consultants at the [GRO-B] [GRO-B] if it was possible that this was indeed the case. They scoffed and laughed and said there was no chance. My mother is a very passive person and they were rude and dismissive towards her. They saw her as a silly housewife and denied there was even a possibility. No treatment plan was invoked as a result. However they kept giving him the treatment for white blood cells. They put us all at risk in this way.
15. I know my mother posed these questions again later to the medical team but my parents were just told 'no it can't be'. I don't remember the doctors/consultants names who said no, but I know they were at the [GRO-B] [GRO-B] and possibly [GRO-B] too.

16. My parents asked the medical professionals how they could protect us children from possible transmission and again the GP told them my father didn't have Hepatitis and that there was nothing to worry about. It was absolutely categorically denied on all accounts.
17. It was in or around [GRO-B] when my father's infection was finally confirmed. I had joined the [GRO-B] and moved away by this time, so it was only my mother and father who were present. I know the conversation went along the lines of, 'unfortunately [GRO-B] you have Non A Non B Hepatitis and this was discovered from a routine blood test to see what your white blood cell count is.' My parents challenged the doctors and said they had been told so many times that my father didn't have it. The GP couldn't answer any of their questions. This was around 18-24 months before he died.
18. I recall at this point we were all advised by a GP to be tested for Hepatitis C because there had been no infection control in place. Thankfully my mother, sister and I all tested negative.
19. By this time, my father would only go on to live for another two years. His condition deteriorated rapidly. His body was packing up on him. His liver, kidneys and heart were all affected as a result. It was very frustrating that no one had any answers on how to help us. His system was shutting down because he had been left untreated for so long. Someone somewhere must have known; at least that's how it feels.

Section 3. Other Infections

20. I do not know if my father contracted any other infections as a result of receiving contaminated blood products. Other than Hepatitis C we weren't told about anything else.

Section 4. Consent

21. I believe my father was treated without his knowledge and without being given full or adequate information. I know this because my mother was in attendance when he was first offered the new plasma product. He was asked if he wanted to try a new product that would 'solve all of his problems'.
22. My father was told that this new product came from America and of course at the time, in the early GRO-B anything that came from the US was perceived as groundbreaking. It was pitched as a wonderful new thing that was tailored to his needs; he was told if he took it he would go on to live a long and happy life. It was never suggested that there was any type of trial in place. There was never even a question of potential risks. He was just told 'this is going to work'.
23. As mentioned previously my father was told they became aware of his infection when his white blood cell levels were tested. Therefore it is assumed he wasn't told what he was really being tested for. When his blood was being taken he was always under the impression it was in relation to Hypogammaglobulinemia, but to find out he had Hepatitis C, they must have known to look for it.
24. I believe my father was given this product for the purpose of research, because I recall him saying at one point that he felt like he was a 'guinea pig'.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

25. In the early days, the symptoms of my father's infection came on rapidly. It became difficult for him to breathe and he couldn't move. We lived in a normal three bedroom house and just getting up and down the stairs caused him extreme fatigue. He would lie in bed for days. His skin would be yellow and his lips would be blue. If we came home from school and he was sat in the chair that was a great day. Even getting out the house was really difficult. It felt like this all came on within a month or two but this was from a child's

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perspective; it may have been slightly longer. My sister was still a baby at this time. He required a walking aid at first and ultimately a wheelchair. We even had an oxygen system installed in the house. One near his bed and a secondary one downstairs. It would take him an hour just to get downstairs, it was completely debilitating.

26. Due to the effects of the infection, my father couldn't hold down food or fluids. He would vomit three or four times a day, which was just awful. He was frustrated at being virtually bedbound from the age of GRO-B

27. The resulting effect of this was a growing rage inside my father, his anger and frustration grew as time went on. He would lash out a lot, which led to physical and mental abuse directed at my mother at first and then towards me. We effectively lived in a prison. He controlled everything that happened in the home; I would have to come straight home from school and wasn't allowed to play with my friends. I would have to take my sister to the park and then aid and assist my mother as she cared for my father.

28. My father's condition and anger manifested itself in violence which unfortunately had a massive impact on my family. I know that my mother was so suppressed that she virtually turned into a walking zombie. Growing up I would go to bed and hear my father throwing things and abusing my mother verbally. The abuse was a result of him being a caged young man. Selfishly I joined the army on my 16th birthday as a means of leaving home. Two years later my father passed away and I still find it very difficult to talk about.

29. My mother went through hell without me there. It took the soul out of her. My father got away with beating her. With the small amount of strength he had, he would throw things at her and my little sister had to witness it all. It was completely irrational behaviour, but he wasn't like this before his infection. I can only put it down to him being exhausted and immensely frustrated with all he was going through. Towards the end of his life, my mother said he turned into someone she couldn't recognise.

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30. Before my father became ill, he was a different person. I remember I used to feel loved. I had two great looking parents who doted on me. They were fun and showed me all the love a child would need. My little sister never got to experience my father like this; I only ever had it for a few years myself. We all felt robbed. My mother was robbed of her life and my sister and I were robbed of our childhood. If you focus on it too much you feel not only saddened, but bitter.

31. I will never be able to forgive or forget what happened. I am now at the age of [GRO-B] and I have placed it all in a metaphorical box that I don't like to open. My father was absolutely awful with my mother, it just got worse and worse. Things began to escalate when I was around [GRO-B] years old. As my father became more poorly and wasn't capable of physical violence he resorted to verbal and mental abuse which took the soul out of my mother. He used my sister as a weapon against my mother. I can't explain her harrowing story of being beaten and having no-one to protect her, all the while still trying to provide a family unit.

32. The reason I'm telling this story, rather than my mother, is due to the fact that she is now far too weak and can't bring this up. She was a widow with two children by the age of [GRO-B].

33. I feel that my sister and I were robbed of our childhood. We were, as I mentioned earlier, unable to do 'normal' activities with our parents. My father was too unwell and my mother had to care for my father. We were loved, fed, clothed and bathed with the minimal money we had coming in. However material things were non-existent to us.

34. We never had a holiday or any sort of break. We couldn't have friends sleep over because my father would be violently sick every single night, which we found embarrassing. We didn't do anything, except for what my sister and I could do on our own. As a kid you make the most of it; it was all we knew anyway.

35. I joined the GRO-B on my 16th birthday. I spent a year at the apprentice college in GRO-B before moving to a GRO-B. When I moved to GRO-B my father was put into the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and I would often have to return to see him, which heavily disrupted my career.
36. I had to come home to care for my sister and mother, while my mother cared for my father. There was nobody to take my sister to school so I had to take over the duty of being a parent during the day and then go to the hospital to be with my father and sleep on the chair next to him in the night, so my mother could get some rest. This process would restart again the next day. This happened on three occasions before my father passed away and each time it would go on for months. Just before his passing I was home for about four months.
37. When my father died, he had been in ICU at the GRO-B for around four months. We were all with him at the time but didn't know it was coming at all. All the consultants had told us was that he was not well, but that he was a fighter. We always thought he would get better. It was only around three hours before he passed away, that we were informed the prognosis was not positive. We were told 'it looks quite grey' but weren't given much more information before this.
38. I would say the consultants lied to us, because my mother and I were always asking questions and the consultants always told us my father would be fine. It was only the nurses that had been honest and said they thought he wouldn't make it. The consultant's words are what led to my father's death blindsiding us. We were left in shock. We were fed fibs and lies.
39. I put myself in a shell after my father died. My uncle (father's brother) came with me to register the death but I was in denial for years. I guess as a mental block I didn't look at my father's death certificate and have never looked since. I'm not sure what is stated as the cause of his death.

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40. Being stubborn at the time, I didn't focus on seeking any counselling or psychological help; I focused on helping my mother. I went back to the army soon after, so I had to leave them. No GP would sign me off as they said I was well and fit, which physically I was. However, with my mental state I believe I should have been signed off by my GP.
41. I spent around eight months in **GRO-B** my first **GRO-B** was six months and the second was for a two month period. When I came back I sought help. It manifested that a lot of my PTSD wasn't from **GRO-B** but from what happened with my father. It wasn't until 2002, that I sought further counselling because I had turned into an angry person. In around 1991/1992 the medical services weren't what they are now. You were just told to get on with life and you would be fine. The treatment in 2002 helped me a lot.
42. I can't answer for my sister; unfortunately she passed away last year on **GRO-B** **GRO-B** She spent more time with my father during the latter years than I did. He treated her differently than he did my mother and I. I do know however, my sister also had to seek help due to the loss of my father.
43. My mother lives close by and I get to see her about three or four times a week, if not more. Neither of us were able to handle my sister's death. She passed away with something that we think is very much related to my father's death, which makes it worse. If my father had not received contaminated blood I feel our lives would have been completely different.
44. We did unfortunately face stigma growing up, as a result of my father's infection. My sister and I were ridiculed at school for having a disabled father. The kids would call us "thalids" (due to thalidomide and the effect it had on unborn children) because my father could never attend anything at the school such as events, assemblies or sports day. He had a disabled badge in the car and was in a wheelchair. Children were cruel to us and we were the butt of many jokes. People could see his lack of mobility although they didn't know about his condition.

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45. In the latter years, he had to have a permanent oxygen system. Oxygen systems were cumbersome back then. They were made of reinforced steel and required him to have a mask over his face.
46. I recall two stories involving times he went out with his friends to play pool but suffered stigma. I wasn't there but I was told. They thought he was swinging the lead somewhat, when he had to give up work and was called a scrounger.
47. In the early days, my father looked fine on the outside; people didn't believe there was anything wrong with him. It was when he moved that he had problems with his oxygen intake and had rest. People were ignorant, jealous and naïve. They would ridicule him in front of people and thought he was a scrounger seeking benefits and that he didn't deserve the help he received.
48. This also happened once in town when my father had to stay in the car and my mother had parked in the disabled bay to pick up a prescription. Someone he knew was passing and told him there was nothing wrong with him and to get over it. This made my father very angry and when we got home, my mother and I felt the brunt of this.
49. When my father was young he was in the **GRO-B**. He was there for four years I believe and then left the **GRO-B** to join **GRO-B**. **GRO-B**. He spent a year there and then became a bus driver after obtaining his bus license. As his illness progressed he was no longer able to walk from the bus stops through shift changes. After his illness became apparent to others, he was told he may not be safe to drive a public service vehicle. He was forced to give up work. As a result my mother had to work and did cleaning jobs where she could. When my father became unwell she had to give up work too and became his carer.
50. My family were very social when I was young. We would go to our grandparents every other weekend because our parents went out with friends. Every month my father would go out and play snooker and pool with his friends. I remember we would go to pick him up. However as the years went on I only remember one friend of my father's who would stay in contact. His circle of friends quickly fell by the wayside.

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51. We didn't have an extended family. We only used to see my father's brother and parents. He felt ashamed and embarrassed to see anyone else. If he had an accident, he didn't want anyone to see. My father kept his circle very small. His brother, my uncle, has mental health issues and doesn't want to see anyone anymore either. After the loss of his brother he began to withdraw himself from us and after he lost his parents, he withdrew from us completely.
52. From the age of four I had always wanted to become a soldier. I went to a school full of military children and as I mentioned earlier wanting to join the military also gave me the opportunity to leave home at a young age.
53. My performance at school was definitely affected by my father's infection with contaminated blood. When my sister and I were younger, sometimes we would have sleepovers at friends' houses. However because we couldn't ever invite anyone over to ours due to my father's illness they thought we were just taking advantage and we stopped receiving invitations.
54. I can honestly say I was suffering from depression from around the age of eight. Unfortunately my depression was magnified in my teenage years. Teenage years are troublesome for all of us but it was awful being beaten and seeing my mother being beaten by my father. She would try to cover it up although you could see the marks, cuts and bruises she suffered. This is hard for anyone to witness, but being a child of such a young age; it really affected me on an emotional level. My sister would have nightmares and became a recluse due to being bullied at school. I also became a recluse.
55. Financially we struggled, we never had any money. We only lived on what the state could provide us with. We never went on holidays, not even camping. I only left GRO-B once before I was 16 and that was to go to a family wedding in GRO-B. We didn't even stay the night because my father was embarrassed of his condition.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

56. I was never offered any counselling or psychological support as a result of my father's infection or his subsequent death. The only help I did get I sought myself many years later.

57. My mother absolutely needs help. She became a widow at the age of [GRO-B] and last year, we lost my sister who was only [GRO-B] years old herself. My mother is now [GRO-B] years old and a cancer survivor in addition to all else. She is not in the best of health; she is very weak and has had a tough life. She needs help.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

58. We never received any money other than the benefits we were on, due to my parents being unable to work. I don't know what else my parents ever received but I know that we lived hand to mouth and survived on clothes from charity shops and hand me downs.

59. I had never even heard any Trusts existed up until this appointment.

Section 8. Other Issues

60. I just want answers as to why and how this happened.

61. Primarily, I want whoever is responsible to be brought to justice over this. Obviously not just for my family, but all the cases that are being held and all of the lives that have been affected and ruined.

62. I want some sort of remit for my mother; she had to endure most of this. My sister and I also suffered but I am doing this in lieu of my mother as she is too ill to do it for herself.

63. Whichever community or board and whoever on the other side of the pond made the decision to go ahead and sell the infected bloods to this country, need to be reprimanded for the decisions they made.

64. Someone needs to pay for this. It all seems based on greed and the real life impact it has had, is nothing short of disgusting.

Anonymity

65. I wish to remain anonymous for the purposes of this Inquiry.

66. 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..... 12. 9. 19