

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN3030001

Exhibits: WITN3030002-WITN3030003

Dated: January 2020

## 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 I was born on GRO-B I live at GRO-B  
GRO-B with my partner and two foster  
children, aged 15 and 16. I have two biological children from my previous  
marriage, aged 32 and 27. I have been successfully running my own GRO-B  
GRO-B business for the past 30 years.

2. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

### Section 2. How infected

3. On 14 August 1991, I was travelling from Ipswich to Norwich, when I was involved in a serious road traffic accident. Although I have no recollection of the incident circumstances, I am told I collided head on with another vehicle.

4. I was tended to fairly quickly by paramedics from the Norfolk Rescue Service, before receiving roadside care from the main ambulance and fire crews. The severity of the accident meant I was required to be cut out of my vehicle and placed on a drip in the ambulance.
5. I was taken to Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, (some 10-12 miles away) and placed under the urgent care of Dr Tucker. Whilst in the operating theatre, I am told one of my veins burst, causing significant blood loss and requiring 30 units of blood to rectify the damage.
6. I have since read my medical notes and now know I received numerous blood products, as exhibited at **WITN3030002**. I believe it was some of this blood that was contaminated.
7. I was in a coma for 12 days, before waking up in quite some discomfort in the middle of the night in a halo jacket. In addition to my internal injuries, I had also suffered a broken neck, damage to my C2 and C3 vertebrae, various other broken bones to include my right femur and loss of my right elbow.
8. I cannot recall what I was told when I woke up. I must have questioned why I was in hospital and my wife at the time would have explained what had happened. It was a stressful time as my wife was 4 months pregnant with my son and we also had a young daughter.
9. The doctors spent much time treating the right hand side of my body, which is where I sustained the majority of my injuries. They also requested my father's permission to remove my right elbow, to which he refused as he knew what my reaction would have been, had I have regained consciousness with it missing. I remained in hospital for ten weeks before being discharged.
10. I do not know if my family were given knowledge of the blood products I had received.

11. As per the letter exhibited at **WITN3030003** I believe I was infected with HIV as a result of being given contaminated blood products during my stay at Norfolk and Norwich Hospital in 1991.

12. I was informed of my HIV positive status on 21 January 2003.

13. Immediately prior to my diagnosis in 2003, I had been suffering from tinnitus and hearing loss in my left ear. I also had partial numbness on the left hand side of my face, which the doctors later diagnosed as Bell's palsy.

14. My GP at the time was 

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 and was unable to provide me with an accurate diagnosis. He referred me to Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, where I underwent a lumbar puncture and the consultant, Dr Nelson David, confirmed I had HIV. I still continue to consult Dr David at the GU clinic.

15. The advice I received was to wear protection for any future sexual relations. I also required anti-viral medication immediately, as my CD4 count was dangerously low and the viral infection was high. I was told I would be on medication for the rest of my life.

16. I do believe I received enough information to manage the infection. If I had any questions or queries I only needed to ask Dr David. I also use the information available on the internet.

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

17. When I was informed about my HIV status I was also informed that I had Stage 2 Syphilis.

### **Section 4. Consent**

18. It was not possible for the doctors to gain consent before I was given the blood products due to the urgent nature of the circumstances.

19. I would be dead if consent was sought first, as there was no time in which to do so. My medical notes state that if the vein burst when I was anywhere other than the operating theatre, I would have died.

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

20. Although I suffered from partial hearing loss and Bell's palsy as a result of the HIV, my mental health also suffered as a result of the diagnosis. At the time I thought my life was over, because in my eyes, "HIV was a death sentence" and I knew I had to live with the stigma for the rest of my life.

21. Dr David assured me that it was not as bad as I initially thought because treatment was available, so I could live a normal life and reach an average life expectancy, provided I took the right medication. Even though this was somewhat reassuring, my infected status was all I could think about for a while.

22. Up until 2 years ago, I attended the GU clinic every 3 months to monitor my CD4 levels and ensure my viral load was undetectable. I now attend for check-ups every 6 months, but I still aim to eat a healthy diet and keep fit. I currently take 2 separate tablets everyday and am told this will continue for the rest of my life.

23. I am a great believer in 'what is meant to be, will be'. If I did not have the blood transfusion I would not be alive today.

24. In November 2000, I ran the GRO-B marathon on behalf of Norfolk Rescue Service as a thank you for their life saving services. I was pleased with the GRO-B I am a very determined person; I will go out of my way to prove everybody wrong. Dr Tucker once said to me 'if all my patients had half the determination to get better as you do, the ward would be half empty'. I have maintained a positive attitude to life and believe my "glass is always half full."

25. However despite my positive attitude I can count on my hand, the number of people I told about my infected status. The list only includes my doctor, dentist, ex wife, current partner and daughter. I never told my father.
26. My infected status was part of the reason my ex wife and I got divorced. We were leading separate lives anyway but we began to grow apart and I believe the infection was a contributory factor.
27. My daughter found out because my wife was blackmailing me to get what she wanted when we divorced. She said if I did not agree to her demands, she would tell our daughter so I ended up with no choice. At the time, my daughter was studying at university in GRO-B and I recall the conversation being quite frank. I believed my daughter accepted my diagnosis reasonably well, but I found out later that it had devastated her. She assumed HIV was a death sentence and had no idea how long her father was going to live.
28. I have also recently found out that my daughter, knowing little about the disease herself at the time she found out about my infection, thought that she might have it as well and was worried that she might pass it on to her children. She was only 17 or 18 years old at the time and she remembers the "don't die of ignorance" adverts which were on television at the time. This has stayed with her to this day and clearly had a big impact on her life.
29. After I divorced from my wife, it was a long time before I began to date again. The stigma was constantly in the back of my mind and I found the thought of telling a new partner that I had HIV very difficult. I had to be sure that the person I told, did not tell anybody else. I informed my current partner of my infected status when the relationship started to become serious. It was not an easy discussion but we have now been together for 11 years.
30. Being infected with HIV has also had an impact on me as a foster parent. I had to fight tooth and nail with social services not to inform the foster children's mother that I was HIV positive. There is no fear the children would



be infected, but social services still wanted to inform their mother. I feared if the mother knew she would then blackmail me too.

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

31. I have been pleased with the treatment and care I received following my diagnosis. I take two tablets daily, aim to eat healthy foods and have three dogs to look after, thus ensuring plenty of exercise.

**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

32. I have not received any payments from any trusts or funds.

**Section 8. Other Issues**

33. There are no other issues I wish to raise.

**Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

34. I would like to retain my anonymity, however I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

35. I do not wish 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..... 21-1-20.....