Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No.: WITN2210001
Exhibits: none
Dated: 11th December 2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th November 2018.

I, GRO-B, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1950. My address is known the Inquiry. I am currently self-employed GRO-B GRO-B. I intend to speak about my infection of Hepatitis C following a blood transfusion. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and I and our lives together.

Section 2. How Infected

2. I believe I was infected after having received a blood transfusion in June of 1974. I believe this would have been on 15th June.

3. At the time I was working for GRO-B as an engineer. Some of my colleagues were trying to open metal drum and they were trying to cut this in half. They had not checked to see what was in this drum and I believe it was something called cosaline that was in it. This is a highly flammable substance and the way they were trying to cut into the barrel was with a blowtorch. This was on the surface outside of the mine and I cannot remember who it was that was trying to open the barrel. When the flame hit the liquid, the drum convexed and went up in the air. It exploded.

4. I was taken to the medical centre on site, I was then taken to GRO-B hospital but my injuries were too severe for them to deal with so I was transferred to GRO-B, to the burns unit. It was there that I got a transfusion. I do not recall exactly how much blood it was I received but I do believe I got quite a lot. I was back getting treatment there every week for around 16 weeks. I believe I also had blood plasma. I suffered 35% burns to my body. I do not recall the names of any of the doctors who treated me. I believe I was treated by quite a few doctors. I was in intensive care for around 10 days and I recall being covered in green sheets.

5. I believe that the plasma, to begin with, was because of blisters and my burns leaking. I believe the plasma was to replace the fluid I was losing while by burns were leaking. I got a skin graft as well as a transfusion. The blood was changed every few days. At no point was there any mention of any risk associated with me receiving a blood transfusion.

6. In terms of when I found out about my hepatitis C I believe it was in 1994 that I got a letter from the blood transfusion service. I had been out for a walk around 20 years after the accident and went to go give blood. It was some months later that I got a letter from the blood transfusion service. This letter

said that there was nothing to worry about but could I go and see them. The letter said that they had found an anomaly in my blood but I do not know if they mentioned hepatitis C at the time. It may have been that they did not have a name for hepatitis C at the time and they may have referred to non-A or non-B. Having looked at the letter, it appears that this was 1995 in the February. I had to go to Gartnavel and there I saw Professor Mills. I believe I was tested by Professor Mills who confirmed that I had contracted hepatitis C. I believe I had regular testing for a number of years after.

7. In terms of describing the disease to me he did not tell me much. He said something on the lines of it not being the end of the world that I'd contracted hepatitis C.

8. I'm not entirely sure of the date but I believe it was relatively soon after that was put on interferon treatment. This was absolutely horrendous. I would describe myself as asymptomatic before having interferon treatment. Interferon treatment had to be injected every second day.

9. I was still working at the time that I was on the interferon treatment and it gradually got to the stage that I was not managing to get about and to get to work. The treatment was affecting my legs and I generally was not able to think straight. I had to tell my employer right from the get go. GRO-B GRO-B

10. I was on interferon treatment for a year. I was off for around 18 months. I went off fairly quickly after starting treatment and I did manage to have the full course. I did end up on ribavirin after that. I think the ribavirin may have been started right at the end of me having interferon as this had not worked. I believe I may have started interferon six months to a year after being diagnosed.

11. In terms of how cross contamination and the risk of infecting others was described to me, I was not given much information. I was basically told to cover cuts and not share toothbrushes. I was advised to use protection when having a physical relationship with my wife.

12. I believe that the information given to me was inadequate. I always felt that they were holding back from me and not giving me full information. At one point they asked if I had been with a prostitute and it seemed that they were blaming me, rather than accepting any blame on their part. I feel that jumped very quickly to making false accusations.

13. I do believe that I should have been told earlier if they had discovered that the transfusions given at the time of my infection contained contaminated blood.

14. I had no blood tests or operations between my accident and when I went to give blood, other than to have my pinkies taken off. These had to be amputated a year after my accident. I do not believe they took any blood around this time but they may have. I feel that how everything was communicated to me prior to my diagnosis and including my diagnosis was fairly poor and I resent the fact they have not taken any responsibility for this.

15. I believe that my wife also got tested and had asked her doctor to test her around the time that I found out about hepatitis C. GRO-B GRO-B GRO-B I do not believe he had to go out of his way to be tested.

16. In terms of other medical complications, I have developed psoriasis and I do believe that at one stage I was suffering from depression.

Section 3. Other Infections

17. I was infected with hepatitis C and no other infections.

Section 4. Consent

18. There was no inference of any testing without my knowledge in the time between my transfusion and when I was diagnosed. As I have said, I did not

receive any medical treatment between those times, other than to have my pinkie fingers amputated on both hands.

Section 5. Impact

19. In terms of the effect of being diagnosed with hepatitis C, I would say that I was absolutely shattered by diagnosis. I worried how long it had taken to diagnose it and how long I would have to live. I had a family to support and I believe that I was in a great deal of shock at the time. I do not believe that I had any sort of physical reaction until after the treatment I had.

20. I did get depressed during my treatment. I recall that I was sent a doctor who I believe may have been a Dr Wong who gave me tablets. Dr Wong said that it was purely a psychiatric response to getting hepatitis C that it had caused me to suffer from depression.

21. It was all horrendous at the time that but the tablets did help and did work. It was a short course that I was on, on these pills. I did suffer from side-effects from these pills. It was absolutely murder just to lie in bed because any noise, even the tick of a clock would affect me. I do not remember the name of the tablets I received, nor the date that I received these.

22. With the ribavirin I believe I was on it for just a couple of months. The symptoms were no better than interferon and I did suffer from the same reaction to this as I did during the interferon treatment which had me flat-out.

23. I have had no other treatment and I've never really heard anything from doctors about any other treatments, I felt that they cut me off completely. I recall the remarks they had made about me, seeing homosexual prostitutes or having a tattoo done with a dirty needle, at the time.

24. I believe in around 1997 they said that my liver was active. I had to go for a biopsy at Gartnavel and that is when they tested and found out about the issues with my liver.

25. I did suffer from psoriasis during my treatment. It was just during that time mostly, but I would say that now and again I do get itchiness of skin here and there.

26. I believe that it may have been Dr Mill who described the side-effects of the treatment to me. If it was not Dr Mill, it was a nurse called Sister Spence who was quite good with me and would help with this. Dr Mill did not fully say what side-effects might be but it was Dr Mill who referred me to Dr Wong for psychiatric treatment. I believe it should have been made clearer of what the side-effects would have been.

27. In terms of any obstacles getting treatment, I believe that I was just put on a waiting list, I do not recall any other treatments been mentioned beyond what I had.

28. In terms of any obstacles to receiving other medical treatment, I recall going to see a GP at my local surgery. This have been GRO-B at the time but that is GRO-B now. I was seen by Dr GRO-B when my life insurance ran out. He questioned why I would even need life insurance. He said there was nothing wrong with me and at one stage refused to do the medical. The insurance company ended up having to give me a medical appointment when they found that my liver was active. Dr GRO-B had said something bizarre along the lines of how my family will pay for my funeral and there was no need for me to have a life insurance.

29. I believe the insurance company doctor may have taken blood when he they came out to see me at home. This would have been about three years ago. I never asked to see Dr GRO-B again and now I believe I'm seen only by a Dr GRO-B

30. My diagnosis had no impact on any dental treatment I received. I did tell my dentist but nothing changed in terms of my treatment.

31. I do find it embarrassing and I do worry about medical staff having access to my records. We do have friends who work in the medical centre; I do worry about them finding out given that I do not like to tell people about my diagnosis. The symptoms I had when I was on interferon and ribavirin were flulike symptoms. I felt the cold and was often shivering with aches and pains in my joints. I felt quite lethargic. I still suffer from the aches and pains now and I have to have a bath once or twice a day to deal with my aches and pains I find that a hot bath does help with this.

32. My diagnosis had a very big impact on my family life. I became quite withdrawn and I never played with the kids as much as I possibly should have. I have less issues now with spending time with my grandchildren but I do believe that the amount of time I was able to spend with my own children did suffer. At one stage, I did spend less time with my grandchildren because of work but now that I sort of have to work on my own terms I am able to spend more time with them.

33. In terms of my social life, I have found that with the brain fog that came with treatment, I could not communicate with people as well as I could have before. I found that I stayed in the house more and became withdrawn. Partially, this was because I was worried about my health coming up and having to explain to people what was wrong with me. In the early days of my infection I did not tell any workmates and I believe they just thought that I did not keep well. I'm very worried about the stigma of having hepatitis C and I can only imagine what would happen if the word had got out. This is partially due to the fact that I believe that there is a lack of understanding about hepatitis C. Especially in the early days people associated hepatitis C with HIV and AIDS and the scare that was going on around that time. I was worried to jump to conclusions if the found out and would make the same assumptions that the doctors seemed to.

34. I was much more sociable before my diagnosis. I played bowls and golf before but I gave these up when I was diagnosed. These were a big part of my social life before.

35. I do feel that I lost friends because I could not socialise as much. I was scared to get into conversations that might lead to discussing my health. I was worried that it could come up in conversation and it could slip out that I was suffering from hepatitis C.

36. I do feel that I held myself back. I never got involved with the kids doing football or swimming or taking the boys to after school activities because I was so withdrawn.

37. In terms of the work or effect on my work, after my accident I was given the job driving a van and that was a shift from 4:30 AM in the morning until 6:30 in the evening. I believe I was suffering possibly from flu like symptoms around that time but I did just put that down to the long hours I was working. I do not believe I could have known that any tiredness from that time would have been because of hepatitis C.

38. In terms of the effect on the children, I do believe that they did suffer from not having me being there as much as I would have liked to and that was because of my energy levels that I now think may have been due to me having symptoms of hepatitis C.

39. I feel that my personality changed overnight. My wife has said it was like I had a grudge against people. I am in anger because none of this was my fault. It was bad enough having my accident and I had a frustration related to that but this would also get worse. I believe my family may have noticed better than I did at the time.

40. Prior to working in the mines, I was a mechanic with the police before I worked for the GRO-B. I was an engineer in the mines and as I said I became a driver after the accident. I believe they did accept 100% liability on the accident. I do not know what avenues would have been open to me had I been able to progress further in a career with the mining board as an engineer. I have no idea what avenues would have been opened to me had that continued.

41. In 1988, after the mining strike, I went to work as a GRO-B The GRO-B GRO-B job I had been given following the accident was paid with lower than the engineer job I had previously had. Due to the long hours and lower pay I found I had to work longer to make the same amount of money. GRO-B GRO-B. I did make them aware of my diagnosis and they were very good with me at that time. The manager there had an open door policy and was very understanding. My supervisor was good for giving me time off when I needed it.

42. In terms of financial effects on me and my family, I do feel that I was not earning the money I could have earnt. This is due to the accident and possibly, in part, due to the symptoms of fatigue I was suffering following the accident and as a result of my hepatitis C that was undiagnosed a time. After my diagnosis this further limited what I was able to do. I was put in for a supervisors job when I was a GRO-B and I did not get this job and they refused to give me a reason for this. I do not know if this is because of hepatitis C. I do feel at that point it possibly did limit my earning capacity.

43. My diagnosis has had an impact on my ability to get life insurance. I did have life insurance for legal and general and endowment mortgage that would have been paid off. Even though I did tell them as soon as I received a letter and diagnosis from the blood transfusion service, they accused me of not telling them. They said they could no longer insure me and paid back any premiums. I moved to another company which I believe was Friends Provident and they could only give me an interest only mortgage. When this was due to be paid back we had to sell the house to pay the mortgage. I believe our mortgage was through Northern Rock. Without my diagnosis of hepatitis C, I would have still had that endowment mortgage would still have had that house now. The financial impact has been huge. That house was going to be for our children's future and that has all been taken away because my having hepatitis C.

44. With our children, we told our two oldest children because we thought they could understand and I do recall that when we told GRO-B, who was the

youngest child, he took it a good bit harder. But this did have a big impact on the children and it was quite a shock. All the children probably associated hepatitis C with HIV and AIDS. It may have been the late 90s by the time we told the children.

45. My having hepatitis C was a big worry for GRO-B who was wanting to join the GRO-B. He worried he would have it and then be refused to join the GRO-B. As he did end up joining the GRO-B I do not believe he was infected but this must have a huge worry for him.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

46. No counselling was offered at any time for me or my family. I think we could have benefited from counselling and the family would have understood better if they had known a bit more about hepatitis C and the impact of this. I do feel that what support was offered was entirely inadequate.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

47. I believe I joined the Scottish Infected Blood Forum about 10 years ago and they were the ones who had told me about the funding that I could apply for that and that there was funding available. I believe I got a lump sum of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund roughly about 8 to 10 years ago. I'm not entirely sure when I received this exactly.

48. I do believe I got a sum of £200 from Caxton for a heating allowance. I did not want to apply for any grant through them as I always felt that there are people suffering more than I am.

49. At the time of giving this statement I am just awaiting money from the new fund, the Scottish Infected Blood fund. I believe I will start getting paid this on

15th December and this will amount to £1300 a month roughly. I believe there was just a questionnaire that we had to self-certify for this, I had to answer a scale of three which was mild, moderate to severe in terms of the effect on my hepatitis C had had on me. I indicated that I was severely affected. Due to backdating I understand that in December I should receive a sum of £6300.

50. I found any funding that I had applied for to be an easy process. This is one of the few pieces of good news throughout the time of my suffering hepatitis C. I have no other comment really to make on the funds that have been available. I would say that another impact they have had is having to funeral plans for myself, my wife due to the lack of life insurance we have.

Section 8. Other Issues

51. I do believe that the Penrose inquiry was a total whitewash and I do not believe that anything positive came from this.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **GRO-B**

Dated 02/04/2019