

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN2290001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020

**INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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**FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF** GRO-B

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

**Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth is the GRO-B 1962 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I work as a GRO-B GRO-B and have worked in that role since 1982 GRO-B GRO-B I intend to speak about my experience of becoming infected with hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.
2. I wish to remain anonymous for this statement.

**Section 2. How Infected**

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3. I have haemophilia A which is mild. I was diagnosed with haemophilia around the age of eighteen after I had undergone a tooth extraction and continued to bleed after the operation. I have always received treatment for my haemophilia at the Haematology Unit at Ninewells Hospital, Dundee. I typically receive Factor VIII to treat my haemophilia but I do not require treatment very often.
4. I was infected with hepatitis C either after receiving Factor VIII to treat an injury I acquired while playing football in 1991. I sustained quite a serious injury to my thigh during the game and I remember being in agony after it happened. I was taken to Ninewells Hospital and I received Factor VIII to treat the injury. It was Professor Cachia in charge on my care at Ninewells at that time. I believe it was this treatment in 1991 that led to me contracting the infection because it was the only treatment I had received since I was diagnosed with haemophilia, at the age of eighteen during a tooth extraction in 1980. I received Factor VIII in response to that extraction and that was the only Factor VIII treatment I received in relation to my haemophilia before my thigh injury in 1991.
5. At the time I had this injury to my thigh in 1991, there were a lot of news stories about people contracting infections like HIV from blood and blood products in the UK. That led me to asking one of the doctors that was treating me, on the day of my injury, if there was any risk of contracting an infection from receiving the Factor VIII. The doctor said "not at all". I cannot remember the name of the doctor that said this to me. I still remember him saying that to me because at that time it put me at ease, but I know now, how wrong he was.
6. I was diagnosed with hepatitis C in May 1998. I cannot remember the exact date. I received a phone call from the Haematology Department one day requesting for me to come into the hospital to discuss something they had found in my blood work. During that appointment I was told that I had contracted hepatitis C. I went to the hospital with my then fiancée, GRO-B and we spoke to June Ward the Staff Nurse and Professor Cachia at my appointment. When I went in for my appointment that day, the hepatitis result was there waiting for me. I was not aware of ever having been tested for

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hepatitis C. [GRO-B]  
[GRO-B] We were  
only [GRO-B] from getting married at the time and this news was  
horrific. In the moment I was told though, I didn't realise how serious an  
infection hepatitis C was. I remember at that time, there was a Celtic player  
called [GRO-A] who had contracted hepatitis B. He was back on the pitch  
after four weeks so I reasoned that hepatitis C wouldn't be that bad. It wasn't  
until [GRO-B] explained the infection to me later on that I understood the gravity  
of the situation.

7. At my appointment, all I was told was that I had contracted hepatitis C, they did not give me any other information beyond that.
8. I was not given sufficient information for me to understand or manage the infection.
9. I believe my infection should have been found much earlier than it was. I would typically have blood taken for testing every three months or so in relation to my haemophilia, so how the infection wasn't found in those tests before 1998 I cannot understand. I think they knew that I had hepatitis C and just did not tell me.
10. I thought the way I was told about my infection was ridiculous. In hindsight, I wish [GRO-B] had not been there. She had come along with me for support but neither of us knew what was going to be said at that appointment. The news just broke her heart and it led to our relationship breaking down. She could not handle the situation at all, she signed the house over to me, moved out and left. She told me that I was going to die because of this and broke off our engagement.
11. There was no information about the risk of cross infection provided to me at my appointment. [GRO-B]  
[GRO-B] That was part of the reason she left. I remember I

slept on the sofa that night, in fact I slept on the sofa until GRO-B left the house a few days later.

**Section 3. Other Infections**

12. As far as I am aware, I have not contracted any other infections other than hepatitis C.

**Section 4. Consent**

13. I believe I was tested without my knowledge and consent for hepatitis C before my diagnosis in 1998. I was not informed that test had been done and only became aware of it when I received my diagnosis.
14. I think it is possible that I have been tested for the purposes of research but I cannot say for sure. Looking back, there were many times when bloods were taken from me and it would not be explained why. Anything could have been done with those blood samples after they were taken.

**Section 5. Impact**

15. My infection was very hard for me to deal with mentally, it made me very depressed. Those feelings were worse just after GRO-B left, I was completely broken and all I was left with was my diagnosis. The whole situation just totally destroyed me and I contemplated suicide shortly after she left. I was halfway through a suicide attempt one day when my Mum happened to phone me to check how I was doing. I had taken a lot of paracetamol before she called, I don't know how many, maybe forty or so and the phone kept ringing and ringing. Eventually I just answered the phone so the ringing would stop and I could get on with it. Mum started asking how I was doing and invited me round for dinner the next day. She said she had gotten my favourite food in, lamb chops, and that her and my Dad wanted me to come round. That was the point that I realised that if I killed myself, it would be my Mum and Dad that would come up to the house and find me and I couldn't put them through that. So I

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ran into the kitchen and made myself sick and watched all the tablets float down the sink, still fizzing. If it wasn't for that call from my Mum, I would be dead right now.

16. I did not experience any physical symptoms because of my infection.
17. At this time in 2020, I cannot say whether my infection has led to any further medical complications or conditions. My infection may have caused damage to my liver but I am currently waiting to have a liver scan to assess any potential damage. I was told at the end of February this year by Dr Keane at Ninewells that there could be damage to my liver. I was due to have my scan at the beginning of the lockdown but have not been able to go for it yet.
18. In 2000 I began treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin through Ninewells Hospital to treat my infection. The course of treatment lasted for a year but was not successful. I was not told why it was unsuccessful, only that the next step would be to take a year off and then begin the treatment again a year later. After that year off, I began a second year of treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin in 2002. The second round of treatment was successful, I was tested at the end of the twelve months and it was shown that I had cleared the virus.
19. I did not face any difficulties in accessing treatment.
20. I have discovered in recent years that there was another treatment that I could have been offered in 2000/2002 that had significantly less side effects. I cannot remember the name of the treatment but I have heard that the treatment was very expensive and that was why it was not offered to everyone.
21. The treatment had a huge impact on my mental health, it made me feel very depressed all the time. It made me a bit unstable to be honest because there were days where I would be completely fine and there were days, where I was really down. It felt like I couldn't find my feet emotionally.

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22. Physically, I lost a lot of weight during the treatment. During one of my check-ups, during my first treatment in 2001, I was referred to a dietitian because of how much weight I was losing. I think I went down to six stone at one point, and I wasn't exactly slim to begin with. The treatments also made me feel like I had the flu, every two or three days I felt like I was coming down with something. I was also dealing with a lot of fatigue throughout both of the treatments. I used to play football quite a lot before the treatments began but I couldn't handle it anymore after I began treatment, all I wanted to do was sleep because I was so exhausted.
23. My infection has not affected my treatment for anything else, medical or dental.
24. My family and my close friends knew about my infection but they were all very understanding; so I wouldn't say that the infection had any impact on my life with them too much. I know that the infection really worried my parents though. They were like poker players most of the time and you wouldn't be able to tell how they were feeling, but I know it affected them. My Mum told me after my Dad had died that he had been really badly affected by my infection and he worried about me a lot, he just didn't show it.
25. My infection made things quite difficult for me socially, especially when it came to romantic relationships. I remember there was a time during my infection when I had started seeing someone but I had to stop seeing her because I knew how the conversation would go if I had to tell her about my infection. I didn't have another relationship until I was told I had cleared the infection in 2002. I just felt there was no way I could be in a relationship while I had the infection.
26. I did not suffer from any of the stigmas associated with hepatitis C. No one in the family or among my friends that knew about my infection, really spoke about it with anyone, so that protected me in a way.
27. My infection did not have any impact on my professional life before I began my treatment in 2000.

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28. I was working as a GRO-B at the time I began my treatment in 2000. I told my manager about my infection and the upcoming treatment. He was very understanding but I warned him that I did not know what the side effects would be or how they would affect my work. I told him I didn't think I would be able to work during the year of treatment. He said he would phone head office and see what he could do for me. My manager advised me shortly afterwards that I could take the year off and keep my position. I was to get full pay for three months and then I would get half pay for the rest of the year. That was a really hard time for me financially. My family had to help me out a lot to pay the mortgage on my flat and other things. After the year off, I went back to work into my old position and things went back to normal for a while.
29. When I began my second treatment, I had a new manager. He told me that I would not be able to get the same arrangement as last time and said the only thing I would be entitled to would be statutory sick pay. I knew I couldn't survive on that and so again I had to rely on my family to help me out financially during that year. It was very embarrassing for me, it felt very degrading. I managed to return to work after the year in my previous position, but that year was a nightmare financially.

### Section 6. Treatment, Care and Support

30. I have not faced in any difficulties in obtaining treatment care or support because of my infection.
31. I have never been offered counselling or psychological support because of my infection. I asked about seeing a psychiatrist during my second treatment, because of how it was affecting my mental health, but the hospital didn't get back to me. I was feeling as low as I have ever felt during that time and if psychological support had been available, it would have helped me alot.

### Section 7. Financial Assistance

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32. I received £20,000 from the Skipton Fund in 2003, but I used eighty percent of that money to pay back the members of my family that had supported me financially during my treatment in 2000 and 2002. I had always said to them that I would pay them back and I made sure that I did. The Skipton Fund wrote to me to inform me of my eligibility for financial assistance, I cannot remember exactly when I received this letter but I think it must have been a few weeks before I received the payment. To receive the payment I had to fill out an application form that they sent to me. I did not face any difficulties applying to the fund, the process was pretty straightforward.
33. At the bottom of the letter I received from the Skipton Fund, it said that this would be the only financial payment I would receive and that I would not be able to claim for anymore. I could not believe it, I thought that was so degrading. They were treating us like we were begging for money and I thought that was horrendous. It felt like they were saying I should be grateful for receiving anything at all, it was a terrible thing to write.
34. I received £30,000 from SIBSS in 2018. I also receive £1,500 a month from SIBSS now and those payments started in early 2019. I found out about SIBSS at a meeting for Haemophilia Scotland that I had attended. At the meeting, we were handed out forms to apply to the fund and all we had to do was sign them. I don't remember having to do anything except sign something that day, during the meeting. I had no issues applying to the fund, they were very easy to deal with.

### Section 8. Other Issues

35. I have nothing else to bring to the Inquiry's attention.



**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

2-9-2020