

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN3439001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: November 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 My date of birth is the GRO-B 1971. I live alone at GRO-B
GRO-B I currently work as a Social Worker in London. I have 2 children.
2. I make this witness statement for the Treloar's boys that were infected as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.

Section 2. How Affected

3. I was diagnosed with GRO-B when I was 6 months old at GRO-B
GRO-B When I was 13 years old I was also diagnosed with GRO-B I had a lot of seizures in class which made going to a mainstream school difficult. I went to a hospital school for a year in Oxford and then I was statemented to Lord Mayor Treloar's College ('Treloar's') in September 1988.
4. There were 4 houses in the upper school at Treloar's. I lived in one of the houses. The girls lived in one wing, and the boys lived upstairs in a different

wing. In a community like Treloar's you're all closeted in one respect. You lived your daily life together with your fellow students for the time you were in school and in the residential unit.

5. When I first arrived at Treloar's, the Haemophiliac boys kept themselves to themselves. They would not interact that much but when you got to know them they were some of the loveliest boys you would ever meet. We would all queue up and I would see the Haemophiliac boys go and have their treatment, which I assume was FVIII, while I had my medication for my conditions. There were two sick bays, the 'normal one' and the 'Haemophiliac unit'. Once we received our medication we would go to the Quad (smoking area) and the Haemophiliac boys would say they received some treatment. I always wondered why they talked about that they had received additional goodies like watches. I saw them with free pens and backpacks and we didn't. I didn't get them. I was jealous. We now know the boys were given Factor VIII concentrate (FVIII). I watched them go to slaughter.

Section 3. Other Infections

6. To start with we thought the boys were just exposed to Human Immunodeficiency Viruses (HIV), then we found out about Hepatitis C (Hep C), and I don't even want to think about vCJD.

Section 4. Consent

7. I believe the boys were treated and tested without their knowledge and consent. They have stated this to me individually in person in the past. Both those alive and those gone.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

8. I lived with about 30 Haemophiliac boys while I was at Treloar's. I can only think of 4 or 5 who are still alive from my time at Treloar's after being treated with FVIII and who were infected as a result whilst I was at Treloar's.

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9. At Treloar's I saw the Haemophiliac boys go yellow, and sometimes they would look gaunt. They kept themselves to themselves, I believe, to protect the rest of us. In or about 1990 I read the reports about what happened and this was when I knew the full details about FVIII products. Before then the Treloar's boys were tight lipped about everything. It was not until they started dying that I knew the full extent of the scandal. There was a kind of denial at the school about it at the time we were there. Treloar's at the time wants to portray a 'public school' image.
10. I look at the Haemophiliac boys alive now and their lives have been devastated. Their health ravaged, prematurely aged, their jobs have been shattered, their chance to travel abroad has been ruined, the opportunity for children was made increasingly difficult and their dreams were demolished. We all made a vow back then that we would tell the story one day and this is now our chance. We did not know at the time if any of them would survive to be able to tell their own accounts.
11. No one has ever compensated them, not emotionally, not for their lost lives. I am lucky, however I feel incredibly guilty I went on and had my life, I have two beautiful children. I can travel easily. No one questions my disability.
12. I think of some of the boys now and it breaks my heart. Many of them died younger than my own son is now. They were just lads, likeable lads. Some were like my brothers. One was such a cheeky chappy who would come into my dorm room and jump on my bed. The life was knocked out of him at the age of 25 when he died. One of the boys was only about 7 or 8 years old when I knew him. He wouldn't hurt a fly. He died as a result of the infections when he turned 19. The impact was and still is massive and we will now live with it for the rest of our lives.
13. While I was at Treloar's most of the students would eat meals together. I did not initially notice to start with but sometimes the Haemophiliac boys would have their plates and cutlery given out and taken away separately to the rest of us.

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14. If a Haemophiliac boy sat next to you there would be a hover of staff to make sure you did not sit too close. We were not allowed to sit within 6 inches of the boys; they called it the '6 inch rule'. It was as if we weren't supposed to touch them. None of us knew the extent of what happened at the age of 16 but with hindsight I understand they were trying to keep us apart.
15. There is a lot of ignorance about the haemophiliacs at Treloar's. People say to me now 'how could a bunch of boys become infected as they did, that's almost impossible, the stuff of nightmares'. People ask me 'are you sure?'
16. I know the boys alive will always live with the stigma. Some are not even open about their infections now, because, I believe there is still a stigma attached to the infections, in the wider world. We were told one boy died of cancer, but I knew that he didn't. It was easier to say that he died from cancer than from an infection that he received from contaminated blood products.
17. I did have a relationship with two of the Haemophiliac boys at Treloar's. I could have been infected. This meant I faced stigma myself, for a short time. I was at Treloar's but I was sent to see my epilepsy specialist at Oxford Radcliff Infirmary. I had to have regular blood tests myself for my medication. Up until that point I had them every 6 to 8 weeks so I knew the nurses very well. They would normally wear their usual nurse's outfit. However, in November 1988 they came into the room wearing masks and had gloves on. They used to have a joke with me but this time around they said to me 'don't you realise you put us at risk as well as all the other patients, what do you think you were doing?' I was only 16 or 17 years old doing what every other teenager would do. I went out of the room feeling very small, very lonely. For a moment, I understood the stigma, and 'the boys' have to live with this all the time.
18. When I had the first relationship I was called into the deputy head teacher's office and told I brought the college into disrepute. The risk of infection was only voiced after the relationship and never before. I was told to keep it confidential. I was suspended and my mother was called. My mother was told I needed a HIV test and I was treated badly while I was waiting for the test result. I became solidarity and quiet and I stopped going out with my friends.

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What was the point of having friends if I was going to die. I did not want to put anyone through further emotional pain. The result took around 6 weeks. While I was waiting for the test result I thought I had been given a death sentence. At the age of 16 I thought the game was up. I was planning my own death. It was a very dark place and time.

19. The second relationship was less intense; he said we were not going to have a full physical relationship because he did not want to infect me. At that point I knew what was happening on a basic level, but we were not allowed to say anything. I did not know about Hep C at that time. A young man making decisions like that should not have to think about infecting a potential partner.

20. Both HIV tests that I had were negative but it has obliterated my future relationships. I am so careful. It's a shadow that has hung over every relationship I have had since. I will always tell any new partners that I have to be tested before I go near them. They are aware of my anxiety. I am very conscious when I start a new relationship.

21. After everything that had happened at Treloar's, I always question any new treatment that the hospital suggests to me. I will always ask questions about it, I want to know where it has been tested. When I was pregnant, they wanted me to test for the effect of new epilepsy medication on pregnant women, but I did not believe it was safe. I question my treatment, and my friend's treatment. Up until my mid 20's I needed regular blood tests and it still plays on my mind were they checking up on me to?

22. I feel that I have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), although I have not been diagnosed with it. I am always anxious and I have a lot of flash backs in relation to 'the boys'. I hear the echoes of their voices, of those who have gone. It is an injustice for those who are not here anymore, or those Treloar's student who want to talk but can't because of the trauma.

23. About two years ago, I had a major fit as a result of my condition. I remember being in the hospital ward and there was a lady next to me who had a blood transfusion and my PTSD kicked in. I was saying I needed to get out of there.

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Everywhere I looked there were vials of blood. At the time I was not physically able to get up and walk away but all I wanted to do was get up and run away from the ward and not come back.

24. I play the song 'Empty Chairs at Empty Tables' from Les Miserables on repeat sometimes. The lyrics to that song mean a lot to me. I relate to them when the lyrics state 'Oh my friends, my friends forgive me, that I live and you are gone, there's a grief that can't be spoken, there's a pain goes on and on... Oh my friends, my friends, don't ask me what your sacrifice was for, empty chairs at empty tables, where my friends will sing no more'. It is especially poignant because many of the boys were in the school band and loved music. For my son's 20th birthday we went to see Les Miserables at the West End and when the 'Empty Chairs at Empty Tables' song started I just burst into tears. It has affected my children, family and friends by association because I go back to that place, and get very melancholy. It is a kind of trauma. When I was in my early 20s the movie Philadelphia came out and I burst into tears and thought about the boys at Treloar's. I don't often show emotions and it takes a lot for me to cry. But there are moments when something reminds me of the boys and I can't help myself and suddenly find myself in tears.

25. I have had to take some sick days because of what happened at Treloar's. Particularly around the outcome of the Penrose Inquiry because this distressed me so much. The Inquiry has come on and something has been said and the PTSD starts. It affects my emotional resilience. I go back to seeing the boys going up the corridor to the Haemophilia unit to receive their treatment. It is a recurring nightmare. Could I have stopped it?

26. Even though it is said that we went to a college where people have life limiting illness, Haemophilia wasn't one of them. One of the girls at Treloar's had GRO-B She was taken ill one day and one of the Haemophiliac boys she had a crush on held her hands all day. She died that night and he died two years later. He should have lived for far longer. We remember all those who died of their own impairments but for the Haemophiliacs it was an injustice.

27. In or about [GRO-B] I was the [GRO-B] of the Treloar's association. We arranged reunions. It was the role of the [GRO-B] to read the list of those who had died the year before. I can still see myself going into the Treloar's hall and reading out the list of names of people that have died. There must have been about 15 that year, 8 of them were Haemophiliac boys, including the two I had relationships with. The gasps in that room were unbelievable because of the number of Haemophiliac boys that had died. I had to keep my voice straight because I felt a sense of responsibility. Should I have prevented it? Could I have said something which would have changed the situation? I don't think I could. They were given a treatment with a deadly infection.

28. There are Treloar's students who are unable to return to the reunions because there is too much shock and trauma. Some choose to bury it. We had the Pew dedication in July last year at a church with a memorable service. I look at the school pictures and videos and it is haunting. I go to the reunions every year and I place yellow, red, and orange roses in the chapel. The corridors feel haunted now. The quad is locked.

29. One of the nurses from Treloar's blames herself completely because she handed the boys a death sentence and showed them how to inject FVIII. She was not to blame. At 17 or 18 years old I remember going to the sick bay by the 'Haemo unit' and I had the Senior Master with me and one of the boys went in and he said '*poor bastard*', I said '*what do you mean sir?*', and he replied '*you do know he has been infected*'. I was still not really aware of the extent of the infections at Treloar's and was completely unaware of the wider infections in the community that I know of today.

30. Had I known then what I know now, I wish I could have barred the doors, blocked the windows, rugby tackled them, anything to stop them going to the Haemophiliac unit to get their treatment. Could I have prevented it? This continues to haunt me to this very day. I continue to feel guilty for standing by and watching helplessly at the time.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

31. I was not offered any support until it was too late. It would have absolutely helped me at the time had it been offered to me.

32. In or about 1988 Treloar's bought in a trust to advocate on our behalf. They took a few of us into the snooker room and we had a chat but we never heard from them again. Today you would expect your views to be heard. I wish someone would have spoken to me there and then. It makes me cross and very angry. Angry does not seem to be a strong enough word. Had someone done so could this have been stopped earlier?

33. The only time I have been offered counselling was after the GRO-B when the Inquiry started. There were some interesting comments as someone said they did not realise there were girls who attended Treloar's. A lady from the British Red Cross arranged telephone counselling for Wednesdays. During my second sessions the women broke down on me, so I decided to not go back.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. I think 'the boys' and all those infected should get compensation. They have lost their livelihoods. Money is not going to bring them back but I believe there should be more funds available to them and their families to support and compensate for the loss of livelihoods, opportunities and dreams.

Section 8. Other Issues

35. Most of my life, for over 30 years I have just wanted justice, but I think the injustice will live on. I want to know why did they target a school for disabled children? Generations of boys have had their lives ruined. All they wanted was an education. Their fate was sealed at the NHS Haemophiliac unit attached to the school.

36. I don't blame Treloar's education or care staff. Many of them have suffered the trauma too although they were the adults. There are some that still support us today. However, there are others who also can't talk about it. There are some from the NHS Haemophiliac unit attached to the school that

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need to be held accountable for what had happened. I am angry about it. Who is responsible? Why did it happen? The Haemophiliac boys were used. Someone knew that the blood was tainted before it was administered to the boys. That's very clear. Yet they gave it to them anyway. Then we watched them die slowly, I continued to watch them, support them, where I can and when they are sick I worry about what's going to happen for them next. It's like putting rat poison into my medication and a generation of epileptics being wiped out.

37. My friend attended Treloar's and she died at the age of 47 last year from her own impairments. She was married to a Haemophiliac who has died. Who is going to speak for them now? She was a great advocate for contaminated blood and disabilities in general.

38. Another friend died in her mid 20's from her own impairments. She was married to one of the few haemophiliacs who remain. She is not forgotten. Their testimonies would have been very powerful but their voices are lost, but we can remember them here today I don't want their voices forgotten.

39. I have been advised by my former consultants for my own impairment that they do not have evidence in their records of certain medical tests and certain medication that I had between 1988 and 1990. I do not know if there is a correlation with my time at Treloar's or the Tainted Blood Inquiry itself however it continues to give me great difficulties because the evidence of my treatment in my records does not exist. I feel there have been times when I have been disbelieved about my own medical history and doctors have had to seek clarification from wider family member to verify I have had previous tests and medication because the records do not exist. This caused me great grief and upset at a point when I was very unwell, it continues to do so.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

40. I am seeking anonymity and would like my Statement redacted before publication. However I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

41. I have waited 30 years to keep my vow to those here and those no longer here and it is for this reason I would like to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Sign GRO-B

Dated 13th November 2019