

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN3856001

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 I was born on GRO-B 1961 and I live at GRO-B GRO-B with my husband of 40 years GRO-B: H We have two sons who are GRO-B and GRO-B I am a retired GRO-B GRO-B
2. I make this statement in relation to my husband who was infected with Hepatitis C (Hep C) as a result of receiving contaminated blood transfusions.
3. H has also produced a witness statement for the Inquiry, GRO-B.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to H s 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 Affected

5. I remember in 1986 [H] looked very pale, and his face was drawn. I knew he didn't feel very well and he agreed to go and see his GP [GRO-B] at the [GRO-B]
6. The doctor took blood tests and referred [H] to Hillingdon Hospital (HH) as he was anemic. After having the blood test we received a letter through the post requesting that he see a specific doctor, called Dr [GRO-D] who was a consultant gastroenterologist. Dr [GRO-D] told [H] that he would need further tests and needed a bone marrow extraction.
7. I went up to HH with my father-in-law to see [H] once the procedure had been performed. [H] told me that he had been given a blood transfusion whilst undergoing the treatment as his platelets were low and it was done at the instruction of Dr [GRO-D] .
8. At the time we thought nothing of it, thinking it must have been part of the treatment he was having and he was in good hands. We waited for the letter to confirm that everything was a success and to collect [H]'s results. We didn't hear anything for a few weeks, and then a letter came through requesting that [H] go back and see Dr [GRO-D] for an appointment.
9. We entered the consulting room and Dr [GRO-D] was sat behind his desk with a nurse stood behind him. He was hesitant and looked up from his notes, sitting back in his chair. He began to discuss why he had called us into the hospital. He asked us if we were okay, to which we responded 'fine thank you'.
10. The next thing he said to us was 'do you want the good news or the bad news first'. [H] and I laughed at first, thinking he was making a joke. It dawned on us that he wasn't and [H] shouted 'what bad news?' I felt incredibly faint and shaky. Dr [GRO-D] said 'The bad news is that you have contracted Hep C through the blood transfusion you were given because of your low platelets. It is not my fault but you have contracted Hep C (which was known as Non A, Non B Hepatitis).

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11. At that moment [H] said 'I will sue you for this mistake' to which Dr [GRO-D] replied 'You can't sue me, but if you need to sue someone you can sue this hospital'. He shrugged his shoulders in a belligerent manner, saying it to us in a very matter of fact way.
12. [H] and I were in complete shock. I cannot even recall what the good news was, as the bad news shook us completely. Dr [GRO-D] said that he would refer [H] to St Mary's Hospital, and he needed to see someone on the 10th floor as soon as possible.
13. We left and continued out into the corridor, walking slowly not really absorbing all the words Dr [GRO-D] had said to us. There was no cure for Hep C at the time. The nurse came chasing after us, visibly distressed and crying. She told us how sorry she was for us.
14. That day was the beginning of our nightmare.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. I do not believe that [H] was infected with anything other than Hep C.

Section 4. Consent

16. I wish to rely on [H]'s statement in relation to this section.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

17. When I met [H] back in [GRO-B] he was a strong and healthy young man with a muscly stature. We married in [GRO-B] and had our first son in [GRO-B] and our second son in [GRO-B]. Both of our children were very healthy and my expectation of my life with [H] and my family was calm and relaxed. It felt like we had a happy life ahead of us.
18. [H] always worked hard and provided for our family, putting us first. He never went out with his friends without bringing me along, and never drank to

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get drunk. Meeting up with friends and going out for dinners was our entertainment. We were ecstatic when we moved into our house in [GRO-B]

19. During the day [H] worked for a company called [GRO-B] [GRO-B] and at night he would come home and dig the foundations for an extension on our house. He was a very active man.

20. Avoiding family members and friends became all we could do to avoid the stigma of Hep C. We had seen and heard news reports regarding the tainted blood issue, knowing that the blood had been imported from the USA.

21. I recall us trying to get answers from [H]'s GP but he did not have any. All we were told was not to share, towels, flannels or cups. I was told not to use anything which [H]'s fluids had touched. I was warned that I should consider leaving him, and should I decide to stay that I should know that there was a high risk I would be infected with Hep C too. I was told that I would need frequent blood tests and that my children would also need to be tested at some point. It was devastating news and something I felt very reluctant about deciding.

22. [H] looked so defeated, his world was completely falling apart around him. I would never leave him and I stayed. Enduring blood test after blood test, waiting for the news.

23. Time passed and our numerous trips to the hospital and to see specialists culminated in this being the worst period of our lives. In 2003 my life was completely on hold whilst [H] was fighting for his life in hospital having his first liver transplant. I was a complete wreck and my nerves were shot due to my epilepsy. The constant shock and anxiety brought on several seizures whilst I was with [H] in the hospital.

24. In 2007 [H] had another liver transplant, both of which took place at Addenbrooke's Hospital (AH).

25. [H] deteriorated rapidly and his large frame became so frail over time. It was heart wrenching to watch him suffer. Our love life took a downturn and I

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became his nurse, not his wife. I was terrified of embracing him in a passionate way.

26. In 2007 [H] caught influenza and had to have a further operation in 2015 to correct his bile duct. There is no crystal ball to say whether he will need surgery again in the future.
27. When I found out that [H] was infected it devastated it me. I didn't know where to turn. The thought of leaving the marital home crossed my mind. I was a young woman, no more than 24 at the time. To leave the marital home for no reason other than Hep C was catastrophic. I cannot believe they drove me to consider leaving [H], how dare they! They brought [H] to his knees and then wanted me to leave him to deal with it all alone.
28. Before the doctor told me to consider leaving [H] I never even contemplated it. When they told us he was infected I felt like I was drowning. I couldn't get it in my head.
29. Dealing with [H]'s infection was hard on us, and our marriage did struggle at the time. Part of me considered leaving, thinking I would be a lot better off. However, the other side of me won. I couldn't help but think that it was not [H]'s fault and the only thing I could do was to fight the situation. I knew I was the only support he had, it was the two of us against the world.
30. Prior to [H]'s first transplant my health deteriorated considerably. I had episodes of my eyes going blind, due to my epilepsy. I have controlled it as best I can over the years but at that period of time, when I was told there was no hope for [H], I was feeling faint and physically unwell constantly.
31. [H] deteriorated completely. The period of time between him being infected and having a transplant was terrible. He was like a 'Michelin man', he was yellow, and unwell all the time. He was physically sick and crying with the fact his back was in pain all the time due to water retention. He used to stand over the sofa and I used to rub his back to try and relieve his pain. It would make me cry to see him in so much pain. [H] used to lie down on the sofa

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and I used to rub his feet which were so swollen. I prayed to the Lord, asking if he was there to please not do this to me.

32. Prior to going to the AH for treatment I felt isolated and angry. I did question how this could have even happen to us, it felt like I was in a twilight zone. I knew they would never win. I always knew I had to be strong for [H] and I had to fight this for him. I was his strength and I was there to bring him forward.
33. When [H] had his first liver transplant I stayed at AH in Pemberton house. When I was there you did not automatically get a room, it had to be booked every two days so there was no guarantee I would get a room once I left it. Because of my epilepsy I couldn't get on a bus and go out into the neighborhood to find a B&B. The hospital knew I had epilepsy and that I was vulnerable. When I was in the room I used to wash my clothes in the sink and put them over the shower rail to dry. When I got up to go and see [H] in the morning, I would have to put the same clothes back on, whether they were dry or not. There were facilities to wash clothes, but they were never pointed out to me at the time and I felt so scared and isolated. I felt I couldn't talk to anyone. When I left [H] in the evenings I would go back to my room and I wouldn't leave again until 4am when I would go back to sit with [H]
34. The nurses used to say to me [GRO-B] 'wouldn't you like to have a day out in Cambridge'. I would reply 'No, not until [H] can come with me'.
35. When [H] came home I was his main carer. There was no one else. We were never even offered any assistance from anyone. I was a vulnerable epileptic person who had no support to look after [H]
36. When [H]'s first transplant failed, Dr Alison or Dr Gibbs at AH called us in for an appointment. We were told that [H]'s liver was no longer working at the capacity it should and therefore it was failing. We were told it was likely he would need another transplant. I burst into tears, I was an absolute wreck. One of the doctors gave me a cuddle and told me not to worry and that he would do everything he could.

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37. My mother was very funny about things. She knew that [H] was constantly in and out of the hospital, having tests, and having treatments. I believe she put two or two together, because she did know that [H] had received a blood transfusion and as a result was infected with Hep C. She used to question why he was always having tests. I told her I didn't know. We never spoke at length about it. My mother was never the comforting type, and I would never even confide or cry to her. I still remember her making us use special cups whenever we went to visit her.
38. [H]'s infection definitely affected my work, I was a caretaker at my son's school and I used to go in the corridor and cry. The head teacher would ask me why I was upset. I had to tell him that I had argued with [H] in the morning, never being able to tell him what was really going on. I never took time off work, I was always a worker. It was the only income we had at the time and really couldn't afford to be off work. By me working it was keeping us afloat.
39. When I was visiting [H] during his first and second transplant, a coordinator used to come and see how our family was getting on. She said to my sister, 'get [GRO-B] back to the room and get her into bed to sleep. Her wellbeing is causing me concern'. I was told if I didn't go and rest then I would be sedated. I was a wreck.
40. I saw [H]'s tracheotomy leaking and his bile duct leaking. I saw him go back to the operating room three times during his transplant. I was told twice that he wasn't going to make it and I was taken to a separate room to say I needed to call the family. I argued, I said they were wrong and that he would make it. I went to the ICU and I touched [H] and he felt like velvet, he wasn't warm anymore. I said to him [H] if you can hear me, please hear me, we will buy a house in [GRO-B] and we will go there every year on holiday and we will have a good life. But you need to wake up for me, please make it.' The next day he woke up and the nurses were flabbergasted. They told me he was awake and the doctor came in and asked to see his vital signs. I thanked the Lord.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

41. I have received counselling which was only offered to me after [H]'s second transplant. The counselling came after I came home, and I had to visit my GP about the fits of fainting I was having.

42. I believe I saw Dr [GRO-B] at the time and I remember asking for some form of treatment for my fainting fits. It was only then that Dr [GRO-B] suggested I receive some form of counselling. At the time I was meant to have 6 weeks of counselling which ended up turning into 6 months of treatment.

43. I have since received private counselling, which took place 2 years ago. I was struggling with hallucinations. I would wake up in the night thinking there were animals moving around underneath my bed. I only received two sessions of private counselling to be assessed. After a discussion however, I was told I just needed a bit of help and some medication. I have now been diagnosed with sleep rage and hallucinations.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

44. [H] asked the Skipton Fund for compensation, which I believe he is entitled to. However, he was rejected several times by the panel. Please refer to his statement in relation to this section for further details.

45. I have not received any financial assistance from any of the Trusts and Funds that were set up.

Section 8. Other Issues

46. [H] has been to hell and back and no one should be subjected to a catastrophic injustice like this in their lifetime.

47. This has ruined my life. I was a 24 year old girl, and now I have woken up as a 57 year old woman. It feels like the past 30 years have been a nightmare.

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48. How dare they bring [H] to his knees and then refuse him compensation, it's totally unethical.

49. The only time I felt any kind of relief was when [H] went to AH. I felt there was a comfort there. I knew he would be looked after in that place, and that there was a chance of survival.

50. I had to pay £35 to my GP for a letter to show that I had 'endless' blood tests for Hep C and we also had to pay £30 for some further medical records. All of this had to be paid in cash. To get a few pages of medical records they wanted £50 from us! We refused to pay it.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

51. I wish to remain anonymous.

52. I wish to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed... [GRO-B]

Dated 6/11/2019