

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name:

GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN0192001

Dated: 21st APRIL 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 11th March 2019.

I,

GRO-B

will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B 1949 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I have been married to my husband for GRO-B years and have 3 adult children. I also have grandchildren and great grandchildren.
2. I intend to speak about my contraction of Hepatitis C through a contaminated blood transfusion which I was given in early 1981. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

Section 2. How Infected

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3. I was admitted to GRO-B in Leeds in early 1981 for a tonsillectomy. However, I was found to be anaemic and so was given a blood transfusion at the hospital and then discharged.
4. About two weeks later I was admitted to Dewsbury Hospital in a very jaundiced condition. After I was tested, my blood count was found to be lower than before I had had the transfusion. I was finally diagnosed with Haemolytic Anaemia during my time at Dewsbury Hospital and was considered to be an 'very interesting case'; I even became a case study.
5. I was not advised at any point of any risks related to having a blood transfusion.
6. I received a letter from Dr Alison Townley at the National Blood Services Leeds dated 30th October 2001 stating that my blood donation at GRO-B 1st October 2001 had tested positive for Hepatitis C. I think that this was an extremely insensitive way to tell me something that has had such a negative impact on my life ever since.
7. I had given blood because I wanted to give something back; my mother-in-law was ill in Hospital and had received blood transfusions and because, ironically, I had also had a blood transfusion.
8. At the beginning of November 2001 I was invited by Dr Townley to a meeting to discuss the matter with her and, before she let my husband join me in the meeting, she asked me whether I had slept with anyone else. Her primary concern appeared to be for my possible other partners, rather than me. I found this extremely distressing and I really needed my husband to be there to support me.
9. I told her that my husband was, and still is, the only man I have ever slept with. She advised us to have safe sex... This statement devastated me. We had been married for GRO-B years and, unknowingly, I had been infected for the last 20 years. I felt at rock bottom.

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10. The only other bits of advice I was given were basic, such as, the need to clean up any blood from cuts with bleach and to not share nail files or toothbrushes, which I would never have done anyway. I was also warned to be prepared for my dentist or GP refusing to treat me due to my condition.
11. I do not think that I received adequate information regarding my condition, which made it very difficult to understand or manage my illness.
12. I was referred to Dr M Davies and my husband and I decided to speed things up by paying for a private consultation, which took place at **GRO-B** **GRO-B** Leeds on 20th November 2001.
13. I had my first Liver Biopsy on 29th November 2001 and my second liver biopsy on 29th April 2004, when I was finally offered treatment because the Cirrhosis had worsened.
14. I really wanted to begin treatment as soon as I knew of the diagnosis and it felt like I had to wait until my condition had worsened before I was offered it.
15. I underwent a six-month treatment of Interferon and Ribavirin for my Hepatitis C, which started on 12th November 2004 and ended on 29th April 2005.
16. As a result of the treatment I was cleared of the virus, receiving a negative test result on 14th June 2006, around 12 months after completion of my treatment.
17. However, I was advised after I received those results that the doctors could not say if the Hepatitis C would return. This has caused me immense worry – it is like you never feel that the nightmare has ended.
18. During my Hepatitis C treatment, I was taken to A & E Dewsbury with chest pains. I advised the Doctor of my recent diagnosis which was

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particularly hard for me to do. He took a blood sample which squirted all over the floor and it wasn't cleaned up. It was still there when I left.

19. I underwent a Hysterectomy in September 1989 and, on later being diagnosed with Hepatitis C, I advised Dr Townley about my concern for the Doctor and staff who had undertaken the operation, who were unaware of my condition. She dismissed my worries, but surely the staff should have been informed.

20. There was so much ignorance and disinterest even then.

21. I can't understate how much emotional and physical suffering this has caused to me and my husband.

22. I was repeatedly made to feel as if my condition was something to be ashamed of and should not be mentioned.

23. To be diagnosed with something like this is devastating enough, but when you find out that it was all completely avoidable, to me that is criminal.

Section 3. Other Infections

24. I do not believe that I have received any infection or infections other than Hepatitis C, as a result of being given infected blood.

Section 4. Consent

25. As far as I am aware I have not been treated or tested without my knowledge, consent, without being given adequate or full information, or for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

26. I felt like I had been handed a life sentence.

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27. When I researched Hepatitis C and its effects, the future looked very bleak.
28. While in the Clinic at St James' Hospital, Leeds I was told by a Nurse that it was a nice change to deal with somebody "normal". I was told that most of their patients were drug users.
29. Dr Townley told me in our meeting, as did everybody else I spoke to, that I should not tell anybody about my condition, due to the stigma associated with it and because people would treat me differently if they knew. I came away from the meeting feeling very negative, emotional and depressed. I had been made to feel that my condition was my fault and it had to be kept secret.
30. I felt like a Leper.
31. I became obsessive about any small cut or nose bleed. I worried constantly about passing it on to my loved ones and about friends and family finding out that I had Hepatitis C.
32. To this day only a few family members know anything about my diagnosis. I felt like I kept them all at arm's length to avoid any possible contamination. The burden and worry of it was overwhelming. Even now I can be reduced to tears about it.
33. I had always prided myself on being able to cope with anything thrown at me, but having Hepatitis C completely knocked my confidence.
34. I couldn't sleep and retreated inside myself. I worried for myself but I worried mostly about my family.
35. Treatment was very debilitating. I was constantly lethargic and exhausted and I lost a lot of weight throughout the courses of treatment.

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36. Near the end of my treatment my previously normal Thyroid readings were affected. I have needed medication ever since. I was told that this was a known side effect of the treatment.

37. I still have a lump on my stomach which was as a result of one of the self-administered injections.

38. I have also suffered from a shortness of breath. I discussed this with my former GP, but he dismissed me as an emotional woman.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

1. I would have welcomed follow-up appointments to check everything was still okay after I was cleared of the virus, however nothing was offered to me. This is in spite of the fact that I had been told that there was a chance that the virus could return.
2. None of my family have ever been offered testing.
3. Neither myself or any of my family have ever been offered counselling either.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

4. I received the initial Stage One payment from the Skipton Fund which I believe was at the end of 2004. The specialist Nurses at St James, Leeds advised me to apply for it.
5. I now also receive the Stage One annual payment which began in December 2016 and which I have been paid quarterly since.
6. I have absolutely no idea if these payments will continue.
7. Because I believe the risks were known and ignored at the time I do not believe this is adequate compensation at all.

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8. I found John Major's comments, stating that he thought those who were infected should try and get treatment through Lottery Funding, absolutely abhorrent, ignorant, disgusting and unbelievable.
9. This tragedy was avoidable, but not by many of those who have been infected.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

21st April 2019