

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 and I live at GRO-B with my wife GRO-B. I was born on GRO-B 1955. I was pensioned off by the GRO-B due to ill health in or about 2016.
2. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my 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 Infected**

3. I was diagnosed with Von Willebrand disease, a blood clotting disorder sometime between 1978 and 1980 when I was sent by my local dentist to Musgrove Hospital to have two impacted wisdom teeth removed. During the extraction I bled profusely and this is when Von Willebrands was diagnosed.
4. I received my first Factor VIII concentrate treatment during this surgery. I believe it is this treatment that infected me with hepatitis C (HCV) as I was in hospital for 10 days and when I left hospital I was extremely jaundiced.

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5. In 2011 I was employed as a **GRO-B** with the **GRO-B**. The **GRO-B** introduced a "cycle to work" scheme and I started cycling to work.
6. I cycled to work for about a fortnight and I thought that my fitness would improve. However, the cycling took a toll on me and I did not get fitter.
7. I made an appointment with my doctor because of how I felt and I had blood tests. Once the results were received my doctor referred me back to Musgrove hospital as my liver function test results did not appear right.
8. I cannot remember whether it was my GP or the consultant that told me I had HCV but I think it was the consultant. However, I do remember that I was advised at the time that my liver function tests were not quite right 5 years previously but I had never been informed of this.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

9. To the best of my knowledge I have only been infected with HCV. I have not been advised of any other infections.

### **Section 4. Consent.**

10. I consented to blood tests but I was unaware what my blood was being tested for and not aware that it was being tested for HCV. However the doctor had indicated that they would carry out a number of tests. However, I was not aware that my blood had been tested five years previously for HCV.
11. To this day I have no knowledge of how the results of my tests were used in terms of research and whether I was tested for any other condition.

### **Section 5. Impact**

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12. When I started cycling to work on the scheme I always felt tired and I thought I would get fitter. This got worse as time went on and I appeared to have no energy in my legs.
13. When the consultant told me that I had HCV I cannot remember what details I was given but at the time I still did not think that anything was wrong and didn't really question the diagnosis. It all appeared to go over my head. At the time I was aware of the AIDS virus from the media but I did not know if HCV was a virus or anything and we did not really question the medical profession.
14. I was allocated a hepatitis nurse called **GRO-B** who didn't really give advice on risks but just what they were going to do in terms of treatment. I was also seeing my GP at the time and I got the impression from her that she was trying to tell me something that she couldn't.
15. I was sent to Bristol for a fibro scan and this showed that I had cirrhosis of the liver. At this time I was being treated by Dr Pugh who informed me that I must have contracted this through blood products. I told him that I had had Factor VIII concentrate and he confirmed that it must have been through this that I had contracted the infection.
16. **GRO-B** organised treatment for me and on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2011 I started on pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin. I injected the Interferon into my stomach on a weekly basis and I took the Ribavirin tablets on a daily basis.
17. It was a gruelling treatment which I did for 5 months. I could not work and I had to go to hospital each week which was a 48 mile round trip.
18. I suffered from depression and I would often cry. I suffered from severe mood and temper swings and I don't know how we are still married as I gave my wife hell. I had never been like this before. I also suffered from severe fatigue; I did not feel like doing anything and I certainly could not work.
19. After 5 months of treatment I said that I could not take anymore. The doctors had said that I should continue for as long as I could, but I could not. **GRO-B** tried to convince me to continue and both my wife and daughter were encouraging me to continue but I could not do it anymore.

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20. I remember being told that the treatment had started to work as whilst I was having the treatment I had regular blood tests. However, in the end the treatment was not successful.
21. I was told then that there was a new drug in the pipeline. I was told that they were monitoring patients that were eligible for it and I was told that at first they were only giving the treatment to the ones who were the worst. I presume that this was because of the cost of the treatment. Basically I was involved in a waiting game hoping that eventually I would receive the treatment. My wife and I felt aggrieved because we had both worked hard all our lives and paid taxes so if treatment was available I felt that I should have it.
22. In early 2016 I underwent a second course of treatment which was Sofosbuvir, Daclatasvir (Harvoni) and Ribavirin. This was a 12 week treatment and the side effects were not too bad. We put my side effects in the first treatment down to the Interferon.
23. As a result of that treatment I have been told that I have cleared the Hepatitis C virus. I am still being monitored every 6 months.
24. I do not feel too bad at the moment. I do suffer from a lack of energy. On occasions my body itches.
25. In October 2015 we went out one day and when I came home I had a pain in my side and I was sick. I vomited blood and after I had done this I felt better. My wife wanted to call for an ambulance but I suggested that we left it till the next day to see how I felt. However, in the end an ambulance was called and I was admitted to hospital. They put a camera down my throat and I vomited blood again. I could not cope with the invasiveness of the camera. I had varices caused by the liver cirrhosis. I had surgery to band them and I have since had further checks and further varices have been banded.
26. I was employed by the GRO-B as a GRO-B. During my first treatment in 2011 I was unable to work. My employers could not accommodate with me working a day here and a day there; it had to be full time or not. After the 5 months of my treatment I did go back to work but some days I felt that I could not do the job. We live in a small community and my work was within that community. I did not tell them that I had Hepatitis C; I felt this was such a dirty word. I told them that I had a liver condition.

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27. As a result of the problems I had with varices and the previous periods that I had had absence from work the **GRO-B** decided to pension me off through ill health in 2016. I would have worked for them until I was 66; my take home pay was approximately £18,000 gross per annum.
28. I have tests every six months and I have just had a test result that shows changes within the liver but I have been told that there is nothing to worry about.
29. Sometimes it cross my mind that at the testing time every six months that I will receive bad news. I do find the waiting difficult. I am able to do most things around the house but it takes longer. I find that I go out to the garden to do some work for an hour and then have to take a rest. I do find that I have slowed down a lot to an extent but I do not know how much of this is to do with my age anyway.
30. I have only told close family of the HCV. I was scared of the stigma that would attach as I feel it is a dirty and contagious infection only linked to drug addicts and alcoholics.
31. My wife and I cannot travel as we cannot get travel insurance. Fortunately I had life insurance to cover the mortgage prior to diagnosis.
32. My wife **GRO-B** was tested shortly after I was diagnosed. My son was very worried that he may have been infected so he was also tested for it. They were both negative for HCV.

### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

33. I have not been offered nor had any counselling as a result of the infection. I do feel as I have indicated above that the treatment I eventually received may have been made available sooner to me.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

34. I have received Stage 1 and Stage 2 payments from the Skipton Fund. I remember in respect of the latter that when I saw Dr Pugh he said that he had good news and bad news

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for me. The bad news was that I had cirrhosis of the liver but the good news that this qualified me for the second stage payment.

35. I receive monthly payments from the EIBSS and have been receiving these since June 2015. I have been receiving £1,500 per month but from July 2019 I am told that this monthly payment will be increased to £2,300.

### Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

36. I would wish to apply for anonymity. I understand that my statement will be disclosed and published by the Inquiry. I do not wish to give evidence.

### Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....  
GRO-B  
GRO-B

Dated... 24<sup>th</sup> July 2019 .....