

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN2084001

Dated: 1st February, 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5 November 2018.

I, GRO-B, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1966 and my address is known to the enquiry. I am retired from work, having worked for 30 years at GRO-B. I intend to speak about my contraction of hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me and my husband.

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2. I can confirm that I have appointed Thompsons solicitors to be my legal representative. I confirm that the enquiry should send all correspondence regarding me to Thompsons.

Section 2. How Infected

3. When I was 17 years of age, I was working at [GRO-B], [GRO-B]. I had successfully got a place at [GRO-B] [GRO-B]. As part of the course I had to do a year's work experience, hence I was working at [GRO-B].
4. On [GRO-B] 1983, [GRO-B] I was rushed to [GRO-B] the Southern General Hospital. I had a blood clot on my brain and required two operations. During the surgery, I required a blood transfusion. This is how I became infected with hepatitis C as I was given contaminated blood during the transfusion.
5. My surgery was an emergency and as such I was not given any information or advice beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection.
6. In 1992, I attended the town hall at [GRO-B] to donate blood. In December of that year, I received a letter to say that I was no longer able to give blood as it had been discovered I had hepatitis C. I went to my own Doctor. Her name was Dr [GRO-B]. I was referred to Dr [GRO-B] a consultant physician. We had a discussion about how I had contracted hepatitis C. Dr [GRO-B] concluded that I must have received contaminated blood when I had my blood transfusion.
7. Dr [GRO-B] provided information to me about the infection.
8. I think adequate information was provided by Dr [GRO-B] to me about hepatitis C, he gave me information on how to manage the infection.

9. I believe I was told about my infection as soon as it was discovered. Dr [GRO-B] was very thorough and understanding. Dr [GRO-B] did tell me there was a risk of others being infected through blood-to-blood contact. I was working at [GRO-B] at the time, [GRO-B]. I ensured I got my own [GRO-B].

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I did not receive any other infections other than hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

11. I do not believe I was treated or tested without my knowledge or without my consent. I do not believe I was treated or tested without being given adequate or full information or for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

12. Being infected with hepatitis C has had a huge impact on my life. The physical and mental fatigue has, at times, been debilitating. Physically, I was exhausted all the time. My concentration was affected and I began to slur my words. Mentally I was feeling very low and lacked motivation. I felt like this for a long time.
13. I suffer with dry and itchy eyes. I have also experienced problems with my digestion and now avoid products with lactose and gluten in them. I believe this is due to the damage caused to my liver. There are no other medical complications or conditions that have resulted from the infection.

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14. About 15 years ago, I began to feel very unwell. I was extremely fatigued. I went to see my own doctor, but my symptoms were dismissed. She told me I was just stressed with working full-time. I continued to feel extremely fatigued. Someone mentioned to me that I should try and see a clinical reflexologist. I made an appointment with the clinical reflexologist in **GRO-B** and started having treatment. On the very first appointment, she told me that I had chronic fatigue and that my liver was enlarged. I continued to see the clinical reflexologist every eight weeks at first, then every 5 to 6 weeks. I don't know what I would have done without her. I felt this was very beneficial to me.
15. About 18 months ago, I began to experience extreme discomfort around the liver area. My clinical reflexologist recommended stopping the treatment until it was discovered what was causing the discomfort. In August 2017, I went to see Dr **GRO-B** at my local GP surgery. He took my bloods for liver function tests. I was very tired and had no motivation at all. My mood was low, I was suffering with depression. I asked to be referred to a consultant. I went to see **GRO-B**. I told him how I was feeling and about the reflexology I had been receiving. I was given treatment and ultimately this cleared the infection. Nevertheless, I continued to feel extremely fatigued.
16. In 1992, when I went to see Dr **GRO-B**, he did explain to me that there was a treatment available for hepatitis C. At this time, I was fit and well. He explained that the treatment was gruelling with severe, nasty side-effects. The treatment was over a six-month period. I was due to get married at that time, so together we decided it wasn't the best time to start the treatment.
17. In January 2018, I began a course of treatment for the infection. The treatment consisted of taking three tablets a day. The tablets were called Mavyret. The treatment lasted eight weeks and had a successful outcome.
18. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in accessing the treatment.

19. I do not know if there were other treatments available at that time.
20. The treatment I was initially offered by Dr [GRO-B], I understand, had severe physical and mental side-effects. The treatment I received in the form of my Mavyret did not cause me to have any bad side-effects. I did feel very fatigued whilst I was on the treatment but that was my normal state anyway.
21. I do not believe my infected status impacted upon my treatment in relation to any other medical condition. I do not believe my infected status impacted on my dental care.
22. Contracting hepatitis C has had a huge impact on my life. I would have very much wanted to have children. The thought of passing on the infection to potential children horrified me. My husband and I decided the risk was too great. I look back on my life and it is with great sadness, I am childless.
23. Many hobbies I once enjoyed I could no longer do. My fatigue was so debilitating that pastimes such as gardening, swimming or walking became very difficult. I had to give up piano lessons about five years ago as I was just too exhausted to continue.
24. I am aware of the stigma that surrounds hepatitis C. At the time I discovered I had hepatitis C there was a lot of publicity on the media regarding hepatitis C and the AIDS virus. The infections were linked to drug users and sex workers. Due to the stigma, I did not tell anybody about my infected status. I only told my parents and sister about my infected status for many years. I carry a lot of guilt as I feel I burden my sister by offloading my health issues on her.

25. My husband practically became my carer. I remember he would have to physically get me out of bed in the morning. I was just incapable of getting myself up. It must have been physically and mentally draining for him.

26. I wanted to work for 35 years in order to obtain a full state pension. managed to do this but it was a real struggle to work at times.

27. I was dismissed by my doctor as being stressed. I had to seek private treatment by the way of reflexology. This treatment was very expensive. It was £25 per session and I was paying this every 8 to 5 weeks for 15 years.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

28. I was offered counselling by Dr GRO-B, it was called first choice and it was an online service. I am aware, from the Scottish infected blood forum, that I can receive counselling. This is something I may do in the future. I want to feel emotionally stronger before taking up the offer of counselling. I feel I don't want to keep going over the same thing about what happened to me. I am a positive person and I don't want to keep looking back. I would like to live for today and look forward to the future and have good memories of my past. I don't want to think about hepatitis C. It has become harder to remain positive as I feel I now have a lack of confidence.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

29. I found out I was entitled to financial assistance in 2004. I found this out through my sister. I don't know how she found out about it.

30. I received £20,000 from the Skipton fund. In 2016, I received £30,000 from the Scottish support group. I have also been awarded £1575 per month. This began in December 2018, backdated to September 2018.

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31. I applied for the fuel allowance from the SIBSS, which I received. I would have applied for the income top-up support, but felt this process was humiliating as I had to detail my expenses.

32. I don't believe there were any preconditions imposed on the making of an application for financial assistance.

33. I am grateful for the money I have received however for 15 years I had to fund myself for treatment.

Section 8. Other Issues

34. I wish to remain anonymous in this enquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated 02.03.2019.