

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No.: WITN2085001

Exhibits WITN2085002-004

Dated: 25<sup>th</sup> October 2020

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B**

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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** and my date of birth is **GRO-B** 1953, **GRO-B** **GRO-B**. My address is known to the Inquiry. I intend to speak about being infected with 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.
2. I can confirm that I have appointed Thompsons Solicitors to be my legal representative. I confirm that the Inquiry should send all correspondence regarding me to Thompsons.

**Section 2. How Infected**

3. On the **GRO-B** 1978, whilst giving birth to my son, I had to have a blood transfusion. I was in the maternity unit at the **GRO-B**  
**GRO-B** **GRO-B**
4. I received 2 units of whole blood after the birth of my son due to a low haemoglobin count of 10 GRMS. I do not know the names of the doctors that treated me. The name signed on the birth report was SHO Obstetrics as **GRO-B** My GP at the time was Doctor **GRO-B**  
**GRO-B** There is a letter within my medical records dated 9<sup>th</sup> October, 1978 confirming I received two units of whole blood. I produce this letter in evidence and identify it as **WITN2085002**.
5. I was given no information or advice beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection. The birth was quite traumatic, you trust the doctors. You think they are doing their best for you.
6. As a result of being given the transfusion, I received contaminated blood and as a result I contracted hepatitis C.
7. In 2009, I had moved home address. I was at that time working for a **GRO-B**  
**GRO-B**  
During the summer, I was working full-time, travelling to Edinburgh, then home to the Borders. At this time, I began to feel extremely fatigued. My skin was very itchy and I noticed my urine was almost black. I remember on one occasion, whilst travelling home from Edinburgh, I stopped at a Tesco store to get some food. I was overwhelmed with tiredness and couldn't get out of the car. I rested my head on the steering wheel. I had never experienced such exhaustion.
8. A few days later I attended at my doctors' surgery and reported my symptoms. One of the doctors there took a blood sample and said that my blood would be tested for my liver functions. A few weeks later, I was told that I had raised protein levels in my blood and required further tests. I went

## ANONYMOUS

to my surgery and saw Dr. **GRO-B** she that told me that I had hepatitis C. The microbiology results are included in my medical notes dated 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2009. I produce these results in evidence and refer to them as **WITN2085003**.

9. Dr. **GRO-B** did provide me with some information about the infection. She did emphasise that it could be passed to others, she told me it was a blood borne infection.
10. I do not believe adequate information was given to me to understand and manage the infection; I do not believe that Dr. **GRO-B** really understood what hepatitis C was herself.
11. I believe I was told I had hepatitis C as soon as it was discovered. I believe that correct information to understand and manage my infection should have been given to me at the earliest opportunity.
12. The way Doctor **GRO-B** told me I had hepatitis C horrifies me to this day. I remember she asked me what I did for a living. I told her I worked with children. She said "You'll have to stop that". She said I couldn't work with children if I had hepatitis C. I was horrified as I was off sick at the time and thought I would get the sack. I had heard about hepatitis A and B but not hepatitis C. She kept going on about how infectious hepatitis C was. She said she would have to get someone from the medical health body to come to my home. I thought she meant my home would need to be sterilised. She made me feel so dirty. I felt I was a danger to my family and the public in general. This doctor's appointment was such a horrendous ordeal. I recall it like it was yesterday.
13. I do remember the doctor said that the infection could be passed on through sexual intercourse.

**Section 3. Other Infections**

14. I did not receive any other infections other than hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood that I am aware of.

**Section 4. Consent**

15. I do not believe I was treated or tested without my knowledge or 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**

16. The physical effect of being infected with hepatitis C was mainly exhaustion. I was so fatigued all the time. Despite my fatigue, I had difficulty sleeping at night. My skin was constantly itchy and my urine was a dark colour, almost black.

17. Mentally, I became very depressed and constantly worried that I would infect my family. GRO-B and I was very succinct but when my symptoms appeared, I had brain fog, often getting confused and go around the houses to get to my point, lacking clarity in my speech.

18. My depression stemmed from losing my faith in my body. I have always been the type of person who believed that the body was such a wonderful thing at fighting off infections. I found it difficult to come to terms with my infection, particularly because it was through no fault of my own.

19. Sometime between 1997 and 2000, I remember I had excruciating pain around the liver area. It felt like a vice around my liver. The pain was horrendous and lasted all day. I was being sick because the pain was so bad. My husband took me to the Accident and Emergency Department at Queen Margaret's Hospital, Dunfermline. I remember being given painkillers, morphine. The following day I attended at my doctor's surgery

## ANONYMOUS

and again received painkillers, morphine. I remember my husband and I set out for a walk. I could only walk a few steps. I was in a lot of pain. I had to return home, I was so fatigued.

20. In January/February time 2010, I was offered treatment by a consultant physician, Dr Evans at Border General Hospital, just outside Melrose. He referred me to the specialist nurse, Emma Howie. She was brilliant and explained everything about hepatitis C to me. She told me that I had chronic hepatitis C and that it had been lying dormant in my body for 25 – 30 years. Dr Evans offered me treatment. He told me the treatment was a six-month course of injections and tablets. He did warn me that the side-effects could be gruesome. He gave me a couple of months to think about it. He did say that the treatment wasn't urgent. At that time, I was working and my contract was up in the March. My mother was ill and I didn't feel strong enough to endure the treatment at that time.

21. In May 2010, I started the six months course of taking interferon and ribavirin. Also almost immediately, the side-effects were horrendous. I became a different person. Physically, I could do nothing for myself. I was absolutely exhausted. In the first two weeks, I couldn't eat anything. I was nauseous all the time. My kidneys were really sore and I had terrible lower back pain. My husband was very concerned for me. I remember he would crush fruit for me to suck as I couldn't get any food down.

22. In July 2011, I was informed that my treatment had been unsuccessful. I remember I was devastated and burst into tears. Dr Evans told me there was an 80% success rate and a 20% failure rate. Unfortunately, I was in the 20% category. He told me he would monitor me, twice a year and check my liver functions.

23. In 2016, Dr Evans told me that following my blood tests, they had revealed abnormalities in my blood. He suggested I consider trying treatment again. I remember speaking to Emma Howie, the specialist nurse. She told me there was a new treatment coming out. She suggested I wait for the

## ANONYMOUS

treatment. She recognised how severe the side-effects were for me on the Interferon and Ribavirin. I agreed to wait for this new treatment.

24. In January 2017, I received treatment for my infection. In September 2017, after further blood tests the infection was found to be non-detectable.
25. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in accessing my treatments.
26. I believe I was offered and given the treatments that were available at the time. I do not believe there were any other treatments available to me at the time. If there were any other treatments, they were not offered to me.
27. Whilst I was on this treatment, I remember one day I attempted to go for a walk. I just physically couldn't do it. There is a bench near to my house. I managed to get to the bench and sat down. A friend approached me and started to talk to me. I couldn't understand a word she was saying. I couldn't put two words together. Talk about brain fog, I felt brain-dead.
28. I remember on one of my appointments with Emma, the specialist nurse, I told her how I was feeling. I remember she said they should prepare people for the side-effects of the treatment as many get brain fog. I became very tearful and was extremely depressed.
29. I became a different person whilst on this treatment. I was very snappy and verbally aggressive with my husband. I must have been a nightmare to live with. I look back and feel guilty for what I must have put him through.
30. I do not believe my infected status has impacted upon my medical or dental care for any other conditions.
31. Being infected with hepatitis C impacted enormously on my private life. When I was diagnosed, I felt so dirty and so worried I would pass the infection on to my husband. There was no more sexual intimacy as a result. I felt like a leper, I didn't even want him to kiss me. My husband and I moved

GRO-B

This was around the time of my diagnosis. I kept myself very private and didn't tell anyone of my condition.

33. When I first was diagnosed with hepatitis C, I did not know what it was. I did do a bit of research and realised it was associated with AIDS. There was publicity around the time of hepatitis C being also associated with drug users and sex workers. This was the reason I did not tell anyone about my condition. I remember a doctor did ask if I had taken drugs intravenously in the past. This is documented in a letter in my medical notes. I produce this letter in evidence and refer to it as **WITN2085004**.

34. The impact of my condition affected my husband enormously. He literally became my carer. Whilst I was on the treatment, I couldn't do anything for myself.

35.

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36. For many years, I was a GRO-B I had to give up my job in this field due to my extreme fatigue. Looking back now, I realise my fatigue was caused by my infection. Financially we struggled. I believe my husband would have retired if I had been able to carry on working. GRO-B  
GRO-B I wouldn't have been doing this had I not contracted the infection. I may still have been GRO-B I believe if this had been the case, my husband would have retired.

## Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

37. Counselling or psychological support was never offered to me or my husband.

## Section 7. Financial Assistance

## ANONYMOUS

38. In 2011, my husband mentioned to me that financial assistance was available for people who had been infected with contaminated blood. We got in contact with Thompsons Solicitors and they sent a form out. I filled it in and it was to go to the Skipton Fund. Not long after, I received a lump sum of £20,000.

39. In May 2016, I received a further lump sum of £30,000. This was from the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme. I have also been awarded £1,300 per month from the scheme. This started in December 2018.

40. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in applying or obtaining financial assistance.

41. I do not believe there were any preconditions imposed on the making of an application for financial assistance.

42. My only observation regarding the forms is that it is very divisive. I was classed as severe on a scale of mild, moderate and severe. This has left me with a sense of guilt as I know some people who were infected will be classed as mild or moderate. I feel that all the people who were infected with contaminated blood should get the same level financial assistance.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

43. I do wish to remain anonymous throughout this Inquiry.



# ANONYMOUS

## Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B \_\_\_\_\_

Dated Oct 26, 2020