

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No.: WITN0486001

Exhibits: **WITN0486002**

Dated: 05/04/2019

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 5 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** 1953, and my address is known to the Inquiry. I have a wife and three sons, now aged 32, 37 and 39. I have been a **GRO-B** for 32 years and I retired in January 2005. After that and apart from a six-month period, I continued working for **GRO-B** until officially retiring in September 2016.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus ("HCV"), which I contracted as a result of a blood transfusion I received in October 1981. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on myself and my family.

3. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

Section 2. How Infected

4. On 22 October 1981 I was admitted to the University Hospital of Wales (UHW) after suffering abdominal pain and having vomited a reddish-brown fluid. The previous day I had suffered three episodes of loose melaena which had caused me concern.
5. Once I was at the hospital, the stomach pain started again and I was taken to a ward. A subsequent gastroscopy revealed I had an acute duodenal ulcer which had ruptured blood vessels. I was informed that this was the cause of the internal bleeding. As a result, I was given three units of blood via transfusion. I was treated with Cimetidine and other medication. I was discharged from UHW on 27 October 1981. (I have provided a letter to the Inquiry detailing the treatment I received - **WITN0486002**).
6. I do not recall any staff members providing me with information about the risks of being exposed to infection, nor I remember my wife signing any documents about such risks. After the treatment, there was no follow up blood test for any possible infection.
7. I had six weeks off work to recover. My wife had given birth to our second son in GRO-B so going back home to wife, a two years old son and a new-born was not easy considering that I was coming out of the hospital with a low blood count.
8. I returned to the outpatient department at the UHW after six weeks and I was informed that my blood tests had been lost. Further tests were taken and I had to wait another six weeks for the results. At the subsequent visit, so after overall twelve weeks, I was told I could return to work. Slowly my life went back to normality.

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9. In 2013 I began feeling unwell and had tingling in my fingers. I saw my general practitioner who took some blood tests. As this blood test could not detect anything, I was referred as an outpatient to the gastroenterology department at the UHW.
10. I was treated by Doctors Healey and Sunderraj. Further blood tests were done and they all results unremarkable. On the following visit, Dr Sunderraj asked me if I had been tested for Hepatitis C. I informed him that I had not, and further blood samples were taken for an HCV test. At the time I did not realise the implications. I had heard about Hepatitis C when it was first discovered but thought it was only associated with sexual behaviour; in my mind I had never linked Hepatitis C with blood transfusion.
11. In February 2014 I attended UHW for my appointment with Dr Sunderraj; he said, *"I've got bad news for you, you've tested positive for Hepatitis C."* We discussed my medical history and I informed Dr Sunderraj that I had a blood transfusion in 1981. Dr Sunderraj responded, *"That's interesting,"* and suggested the transfusion was likely the cause of my infection.
12. He then explained the nature of Hepatitis C and the medical consequences that could result. I was asked if I had used drugs or had any tattoos, which I did not. Dr Sunderraj explained to me the risks of transmitting the virus on to others. I provided further blood tests to determine the genotype and viral load.
13. The tests revealed that I was suffering from genotype 3 and that my viral load was three million plus. The specialist explained to me the treatments available and their side effects. I was told that it was up to me when to start the treatment and they were happy for me to postpone it. It was coming into summer so considering the possible side effects that they told me, I decided to postpone treatment. I have to say that if they had advised me that it was better to start the treatment immediately I would have done it.

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14. So, in October 2014 I started treatment and, at the same time, I stopped consuming alcohol. At first, I received weekly injections of Interferon at UHW along with daily Ribavirin tablets. Eventually I commenced to self-inject at home, always on a weekly basis. The treatment continued for six months.
15. During this period, I made a number of appointed visits to the outpatient department. Initially it was on a weekly basis, followed by monthly visits. During these visits I provided blood test to determine if the medication was reducing my viral loads and I also had a FibroScan to check the condition of my liver. The results showed that the viral load was actually decreasing but that there was some liver damage (which I believe to be in the lower-end of orange, where red indicated that the liver was very damaged).
16. In April 2015 treatment was stopped and I was discharged. The doctors explained to me, *"We can't guarantee that this is going to go away completely, it can lay dormant."*
17. I believe my viral load went down to six, I don't believe they ever said it was "undetectable" so in 2016 I went back to my GP for another test: luckily it came back clear. Since then, I have not been asked for any further testing.
18. Dr Sunderraj and the specialist nurses at UHW have been the most informative in providing me information to understand and manage my infection. Results of the tests were explained in a clear manner which allowed me to understand what was going on.

Section 3. Other Infections

19. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only infection I have received as a result of being given infected blood.
20. However, I have never told if I have been tested for HIV. If I have, they did the test without that I was aware of it and without my consent.

Section 4. Consent

21. I remember that when I received the blood transfusion in 1981, I gave my consent. However, as I have already mentioned above, I do not believe I was warned about the risks prior to the transfusion.
22. The treatment I received for Hepatitis C has been done with my knowledge and consent.

Section 5. Impact

23. Before 1981 I was a fit and healthy person. After receiving the transfusion in 1981, I have been able to return to work only after 12 weeks. At that time, I did not suffer from any symptoms, as I have always been reasonably fit. I did suffer from fatigue during my employment but this was likely due to my working shifts.
24. Since I had the transfusion, I have also had some problems with my platelets. I am not sure when this was discovered but it was after the transfusion.
25. In April 1999 and June 2010, I had two hernia operations but I did not receive any blood during those operations.
26. The medication I took as part of my treatment had a number of side effects both mentally and physically: I started to be verbally aggressive to my wife (totally out of character), I had flu-like symptoms, lack of appetite, mood swings and loss of temper.
27. I remember that the side effects were worse on the day that I injected the Interferon and then they were slowly decreasing each day until the following injection. Dealing with the side effects has been a traumatic experience.

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28. I did not face any difficulty in accessing treatment for my infection. However, I do believe that more should have and should be done to monitor my health now, to ensure that the virus does not return. I have read a lot about the fact that infected people are more likely to be cured today than in the past, but I always fear that it can come at any time, despite the fact that doctors told me I have been cured. It is still in the back of my mind and even if I try not to think about it, every now and then, this thought comes back.
29. I am also concerned about the long-term effect of my condition and whether the damage to my liver is going to reduce my lifespan.
30. When the doctors told me about my infection I felt dirty it made me always raise questions about the source of the blood I was given.
31. I have been asked if I experienced any difficulty or obstacle in getting dental care. I informed my dentist that I was infected and that I was undergoing a treatment to cure for Hepatitis C. This did not impact my dental care.
32. After being diagnosed with Hepatitis C, my wife and youngest son (who was conceived after my transfusion) underwent blood tests too and luckily both of them were negative.
33. I had to be very careful in not passing the infection to anybody. I remember that my son and I had to separate our razors to avoid any risks.
34. Initially my condition was only discussed with the close family, but following press release regarding the Infected Blood Inquiry, some close friends have been made aware of my condition. When I received the treatment, my friends would question why I was not drinking alcohol when we were out together: it has not been not easy to justify it every time. I still have not told my father.
35. At work, I made the colleagues close to me aware of my condition, including my GRO-B and luckily, I have been able to work throughout the treatment.

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While I was receiving the treatment, I found myself getting short and abrupt with people at work; I believe this was due to the treatment.

36. I have been asked where I suffered any educational, professional or financial effects as a result of having been infected with HCV. The answer is no. I kept working for as long as I wanted and financially, HCV never impacted my position or my family.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

37. I have not faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care or support, apart from what I have mentioned above about the fact that I think I should be monitored even if I have been cured.
38. Counselling was offered to me while I was receiving treatment, but I had a strong family behind me so I did not take that course of action.
39. I am lucky with the treatment I received from Dr Sunderraj and the supporting staff at UHW; they have been amazing, I can't thank them enough.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

40. While I was undergoing the treatment, Dr Sunderraj informed me that for people in my circumstances, could get some funding because of our condition. Following his advice I contacted Skipton fund.
41. A form was sent out and I filled in my part before forwarding it to Dr Sunderraj who completed the rest. My application was accepted on the first attempt and on 12 February 2015 I received a lump sum payment of £20,000. I did not experience any difficulties in applying, it was totally unexpected.
42. I am currently receiving monthly payments of £387.17 from Velindre NHS Trust.

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Section 8. Other Issues

43. I have never been involved in any campaigning or group litigation. I have only ever been concerned with curing myself.
44. I have been asked what are my expectations for the Inquiry. I want to know why I was infected with Hepatitis C. Doctors are there to make you feel better, not worse. All these thoughts make me feel a bit bitter. I still question why I was not informed of my infection earlier, it should have flagged up somewhere.
45. Dr Sunderraj told me that he was unable to locate my medical notes relating to my transfusion in 1981. But I recall a large bundle of documents sitting on the desk while I was receiving treatment and I wonder where have these documents gone. I understand UHW collects a large volume of records and perhaps they have just been misplaced, however, I am concerned that something untoward has happened. I would be upset if something malicious has gone on. This is why I say that I want to have answers. I want to know why this happened to me and why I have not been diagnosed and told before. I want to find out if my records have been destroyed and if someone lied to me.
46. I am still concerned that HCV is going to shorten my expected lifespan. I have seen the damage to my liver, and I am truly concerned it has reduced the duration of my life. But again, even for this question, nobody has ever been able to give me an answer.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

5th April 2019