

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
GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B I am retired and live with my wife of GRO-B years. We have three grown up children who have now flown the nest.

2. This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

3. I have Von Willebrand's Disease and I received Factor VIII since the 1970s.
4. I received treatment at the Manchester Royal Hospital under the care of Dr Hay.
5. I was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated Factor VIII.
6. Dr Hay advised me that I had Hepatitis C in the late 1990s. I recall being late for this routine appointment which was scheduled to take place just before I was due to go on holiday. During the appointment, Dr Hay questioned me about my alcohol intake and then said "You have Hep C and I will see you when you come back from holiday". The news of my infection

ANONYMOUS

was conveyed in a very matter of fact manner and I was not given an opportunity to ask questions. Dr Hay did, however, state that he would send a counsellor to see me at home.

7. Upon my return from holiday, I went to see Dr Hay who this time told me about the Interferon and Ribavirin treatment for Hepatitis C. He said that the success rate of the treatment was only 2%. This really worried me and caused me further distress.
8. At no point did Dr Hay provide me with adequate information in order for me to both understand and manage Hepatitis C. I confirm that I was given no information about the risks of transmission of the virus.

Section 3. Other Infections

9. As far as I am aware, I have not been exposed to vCJD.

Section 4. Consent

10. I was tested for Hepatitis C without my knowledge and therefore impliedly without my consent. When I was told that I had Hepatitis C in the late 1990s I had absolutely no idea that I had even been tested for it. I therefore strongly suspect that I was also tested for other viruses without my knowledge and therefore without my consent.

Section 5. Impact

11. The mental effects of having Hepatitis C were terrible. It was like living with a death sentence and every day I woke up, it was the first thing that I thought about. I felt very depressed.
12. I received the Interferon and Ribavirin treatment in approximately 2000. I really struggled during this time. I think that the impact the treatment had upon me was greater than the impact of the virus itself. Prior to commencing this treatment, Warrington Hospital and the Manchester Royal Hospital were arguing about who was going to fund my treatment. Ultimately, it was the Manchester Royal who picked up the tab.
13. The treatment lasted for 12 months and I would say that this period represented the worst time of my life. My depression deepened and I became extremely short tempered. I felt

ANONYMOUS

lethargic and chronically fatigued on a daily basis. I had absolutely no energy to do anything. I also suffered from terrible memory loss. It was like a living hell for the entire duration of the treatment.

14. Following the treatment, my legs regularly give way without warning and I fall to the ground. I can pick myself up again but it is not a nice experience. I now suffer from numerous infections and colds. I have to really look after myself as my immune system is weak.
15. Although I managed to clear the virus, my liver was badly affected and I still suffer from extreme exhaustion.
16. I told my family that I had Hepatitis C and that I was undergoing treatment. They all supported me and I felt very fortunate that they did. My wife has been fantastic and has been with me every step of the way.
17. I also told my friends about my infection and I ended up losing some; even those who I thought were good friends. Some friends just stopped calling or visiting and I found this very upsetting. Others started treating me differently with the overall result being that I then stopped telling anyone about my infection. I was therefore forced to keep the reality of my life a secret. The stigma was too much to bear and so unfair, particularly given the mode of my infection. I found that most people just assumed that Hepatitis C was caused by illegal drugs.
18. I was a HGV driver and regularly drove large articulated lorries. I worked night shifts of between 12 to 15 hours. It was upsetting because I was eventually dismissed by my employers whilst I was still undergoing the Hepatitis C treatment. Initially I had to take a lot of time off because it was so hard to keep working whilst feeling so poorly. This led to my boss questioning me in relation to my absences; something which was so out of character for me prior to my infection. I therefore told my boss, in confidence, that I had Hepatitis C and his words to me were "*My mate died of that last month*". This made me feel very anxious and upset.
19. My boss then wrote to Dr Hay asking why I needed to have time of work. Unbelievably, Dr Hay's response to my boss was "*I cannot see why he cannot go to work and get through it*" or words to that effect. I was so shocked and thought that maybe I was just being totally lazy and started questioning my symptoms whilst on this awful treatment.

ANONYMOUS

20. I telephoned a hospital (I don't know which one) in London and asked to speak to a consultant, whose name I cannot recall, in relation to my Hepatitis C treatment. I asked the consultant whether I was just being bone idle and whether I should indeed be able to go to work during the Interferon and Ribavirin treatment. He said that the side effects of the treatment effected different people in different ways and that it was quite understandable that I was unable to go to work. He asked me for the name of the consultant who had said that I should be able to go to work and effectively carry on as normal. I said "*You won't believe me if I tell you who it is*". I was aware that Dr Hay was considered to be a "*leader in his field*". I disclosed that it was Dr Hay and the consultant sounded shocked and said that he should not have said that.

21. Financially, my life has been a real struggle. I have not worked since 2001 when I was dismissed from work and I have had to survive on sickness benefits. I could not buy my children the things that they wanted because money was so scarce. I feel that they missed out on things which I would have wanted for them, had funds been a little more fluid.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

22. I was offered counselling and I took this up. The counsellor was called Meg and she used to visit my house regularly. She came to my house shortly after I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C and she also visited me throughout the Hepatitis C treatment. If I am honest, I don't think that the sessions did me much good because they failed to improve my mood.

23. I have found that some NHS dentists "*glove up*" despite the fact that I tell them that I have cleared the Hepatitis C virus.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

24. I received the Stage 1 Payment from The Skipton Fund of £20,000. I do not remember when I received this payment or how I found out about the Trust. However, without this payment I would have lost the roof over our heads.

25. I initially received £202 per month from The Skipton Fund. I was then eligible for and received the Special Category Mechanism (SCM) payments. Initially these were £1,500 per month but they have now increased to about £1,750 per month.

ANONYMOUS

26. I received the winter fuel payment for the first time in 2018 which I recall was £500.

27. I took the SCM forms to my GP and she, rather unhelpfully, said "*I do not fill forms in*". I therefore took them to the Manchester Royal Hospital who was happy to complete them on my behalf.

28. I have therefore had limited dealings with the Skipton Fund so I can't really comment about whether they were fit for purpose. I, personally, am grateful for the financial support I have received from them.

Section 8. Other Issues

29. I find the Tainted Blood Campaign Group very useful and supportive.

Conclusion

30. I want the truth about what happened to come out. There were far too many cover ups. The Government and the NHS knew that the blood products were contaminated and they still pumped it into us. I feel that we were used as guinea pigs.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

31. I wish to apply for anonymity and I do not want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

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

GRO-B

Signed.....

Dated.....

28/2/2019