

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN4452001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: June 2020

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 was born on GRO-B GRO-B. I live at GRO-B. I am not currently working.
2. I make this statement as an infected person in my own right and also as an affected son in relation to my mother, GRO-B, who was born on GRO-B and passed away in GRO-B. I am unable to be more specific in relation to the date although I believe that it was about GRO-B GRO-B.
3. My mother was infected with HIV via a contaminated blood transfusion during her pregnancy with me and that was how I became infected with HIV.
4. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to mine or my mother's medical records.**

Section 2. How Infected

5. My mother received a contaminated blood transfusion during her pregnancy with me in [GRO-B] and that was how I became infected with HIV.
6. I was born at Watford General Hospital (WGH) in Watford and I understand that my mother also received her antenatal care at this hospital under Dr Lewis and Dr Study. I therefore believe that she received the contaminated blood transfusion at WGH.
7. I do not know if my mother received any information or advice regarding the risk of infection from blood transfusions but I am now aware that my father, who was a medical professional, was very upset and angry that my mother went ahead with the blood transfusion. I believe that my mother agreed to the blood transfusion against my father's advice.
8. I do not know how, when or by whom, my mother was told about her infection with HIV.
9. My mother passed away at St Mary's Hospital (SMH) in Paddington in [GRO-B] [GRO-B] when I was aged [GRO-B].
10. I am treated at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital (CWH) under the care of Professor Mark Nelson and Professor Mark Bower.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I do not know whether my mother was exposed to, or infected with, any other infections. I am also unaware as to whether I was exposed to any other infections and I don't believe that I was infected with any other viruses other than HIV.

Section 4. Consent

12. I do not know whether my mother was tested, treated or used for research purposes without her knowledge and therefore without her consent.

13. I am unaware as to whether I was tested, treated or used for research purposes without mine or my parent's knowledge and therefore without consent.

Section 5. Impact

14. I was GRO-B when my mother passed away which not only deprived me of a mother but additionally of a normal childhood. The fact that I was also infected was too much to handle emotionally because it shattered all of my hopes and dreams for the future and put paid to me having children or any type of "normal" family life.

15. I can't even say the word "HIV". I avoid it and everything to do with it. During the meeting to prepare this statement I was only able to refer to HIV as "*the condition*".

16. It was not until my early teens that I found out I had been infected with the condition and that I had caught it from my mother who had passed away as a result of the condition. I struggle to recall the precise details of how I found out but I believe that I discovered a letter which had been written to my father from my mother. The letter referred to a blood transfusion which she had received during her pregnancy with me and the fact that she had the condition. I think I then had a conversation with my brother about the letter and he thought that the contents of the letter suggested that I had also been infected with the condition. On the back of this, I think I went to the doctor and had a test which confirmed that I had the condition.

17. Finding out that I had been infected completely messed up my head and led me to become an incredibly disturbed teenager. I had to deal with this

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shocking information on top of already having lost my mother at the [GRO-B] age of [GRO-B] I was really angry and the only way I could cope was by blocking it out. I was never able to get my head around the condition and is screwed me up in every way. The condition singlehandedly ruined my life.

18. Around about the time I found out, I remember having a brief conversation with my father which involved me saying "Is it true" and him replying "yes". I also remember telling my siblings about my infection. However, I was unable to bring myself to talk about the condition again and I told my family that I did not want it discussed again and my wishes were granted as it was never spoken about from that day on.
19. I remember being constantly worried that I would infect those around me and I knew that I could never have a girlfriend. I was fairly naïve about the condition but I suppose it did explain why I had always been ill when I was growing up.
20. It was not long before the condition started to take its toll on my health and I became increasingly unwell. I refused to go to the doctors despite the fact that I had lost about 5 stone in weight and had also started to lose my sight. Eventually everything came to a head and I ended up at Frimley Park Hospital (FPH), in Frimley and was then blue-lighted to CWH where I remained an inpatient for 6 months.
21. In addition to the condition, I was told that I had cancer (Hodgkin Lymphoma) and was immediately placed on 21 medications and a steroid to give me the strength to withstand the aggressive chemotherapy which became my new way of life. Due to the chemotherapy I have been left infertile. This is directly linked to the condition I was infected with because my cancer was HIV related.
22. The condition caused me to develop Peripheral Neuropathy which means that I have very little sensation and/or numbness in my legs and feet for which I am prescribed Pregablin.

23. My 21 medications have now been reduced to a more manageable 6 although I still rely on Tramadol to control my pain levels. Historically, the medication prescribed for my condition caused me to suffer with severe nausea.

24. Apart from the initial and brief disclosure of the condition to my family, I have not shared it with anyone else. Even today, the stigma is both real and rife and sadly I always feel that clinicians and dental technicians treat me differently due to the fact that I have the condition. Examples of such treatment include people stepping backwards and away from me when speaking to me in hospitals. I recall a nurse at CWH, whilst trying to inject me, saying "*not to move, otherwise I might get what you have*". I confirm that I am very happy with the care provided to me by Professor Bower and Professor Nelson. Witnessing such behaviours has reinforced the need to continue with my already well developed behaviours of hiding, and isolating myself, from society.

25. I would like to stress how important I feel it is for those infected and affected by the contaminated blood scandal to continue to receive their monthly support payments. I feel that it would amount to a further tragedy if these payments were abolished.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

26. I refer to the contents of paragraph 24 above of my witness statement.

27. I was never offered any counselling or psychological support in consequence of mine or my mother's infection or when she passed away. It was only relatively recently, in 2017, that I was offered counselling via EIBSS. I was assigned to a counsellor called GRO-B. This was definitely a step in the right direction but it is almost a case of "*too little too late*". Counselling should have been automatically provided, at the outset, to every single person who was infected or affected by this tragedy.

28. Attending counselling has required a massive change in my behaviour; prior to 2017 I had never spoken about my condition and the devastating effect it

had upon my life. I found it incredibly hard to open up about my condition because my norm was to bottle it up. I have been deeply psychologically affected by what has happened to me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

29. I was very disappointed with the level of financial support I received from the Eileen Trust (ET) and I would liken it to "*having pennies thrown at me*". I remember giving up trying to obtain even £5 towards my travel to hospital due to the fact that I was made to feel as if I was a criminal who was begging for money. The ET would then make you jump through a series of hoops and issued such unreasonable requests that it was almost impossible to fulfil the same. This was a trust that was supposed to be set up to help victims but in my view it was most definitely not fit for purpose. The majority of the above is directed towards The Eileen Trust. I can confirm that I never received anything from the Macfarlane (MFT) Trust.

30. Apart from the aforementioned, I did not receive any form of financial support until the advent of EIBSS in 2017 when my father received a payment which was double what I received.

31. In my view, the only real improvement that EIBSS has made upon previous trusts and organisations was that is provided me with a direct and easily acceptable offer of counselling via email.

Section 8. Other Issues

32. I would like the people who condoned the use of contaminated blood to be held accountable for killing my mother and for destroying my entire life. I want justice; these murderers must pay for what they have done.

33. Proper compensation is both just and due. Up until now, we have been offered minimal payments from the various trusts and organisations and have been fobbed off for far too long. The very least we deserve is to be able to

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enjoy a decent standard of living. Our infections have destroyed chances for us in life that others simply take for granted such as obtaining and holding down a job, getting married, having children and enjoying a "*normal*" family life.

Anonymity

34. I do want to apply for anonymity and I do wish to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

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Statement of Truth

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

GRO-B

Signed.....

Dated..... 29/06/2020