

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WIT4654001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: September 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. I was born on GRO-B and I live at GRO-B GRO-B.
2. My mother, GRO-B nee GRO-B (born on GRO-B GRO-B) was infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) through contaminated blood transfused during her pregnancy with my youngest sibling, my brother GRO-B in 1986. She died having developed Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) on GRO-B, aged 41.
3. My brother, GRO-B (born on GRO-B), was then also infected with HIV from his birth through our mother's HIV infection. GRO-B has provided his own Witness Statement to the Inquiry GRO-B).

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4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access my mother and brother's medical records.

Section 2. How Affected

My mother

5. My mother had antenatal care under Dr Lewis and Dr Study at Watford General Hospital (WGH) in Watford. She had the contaminated blood transfusion there.
6. I do not know if my mother received any information or advice regarding the risk of infection from blood transfusions. My father, a medical professional, was very wary about blood transfusions. Both parents were against the unnecessary use of anti-biotics and blood transfusions. It was out of character for my mother to have agreed to invasive treatment when a few days on an iron rich diet might have sufficed. My father believed my mother had the blood transfusion without permission or under duress. She was tired, weak and possibly scared. My father's permission or input was not sought and I do not believe it would have happened at all had my father not been away working in the Middle East at that time.
7. I do not know how, when or by whom, my mother was told about her infection with HIV. I do not recall being told that my mother was infected with HIV. I was just a child but I do remember a big blow up at home. My father was so angry that he completely 'lost it'. I remember that I was told not to go near anything of my mother's like her toothbrush and I was told to stay away from my baby brother and let my mother deal with it, should he cut himself.

GRO-B

8. We were not aware that GRO-B was also infected with HIV until he was in his teens. He came across a letter that our mother had written to our father before she died intimating that GRO-B was also infected with HIV. He then

came to discuss the content of the letter with me. I was very protective of [GRO-B] and wanted to remain positive and dispel his fears as best I could but [GRO-B] and I were both 'off the rails'. The fall out and grief from our mother's death had resulted in a very messy time for all of us for a long time. Alarm bells rang for me about [GRO-B] also being infected and the letter he had found was also very persuasive. I tried to remain calm but I was shocked as no-one had sat me down and told me. [GRO-B] was subsequently tested with a positive HIV result and he went ballistic. I told our sister [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] was furious with me. He didn't want to talk about it and/or seek treatment and help and he didn't until he became very ill with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma much later in his twenties. He just wanted to forget all about it and get on with his life.

9. [GRO-B] is under the care of Professor Mark Nelson and Professor Mark Bower at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital (CWH).

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I do not know believe that my mother and brother were infected with anything other than HIV.

Section 4. Consent

11. I am unable to comment on the issue of consent except to reiterate that I believe through my father that my mother was transfused with blood without consent or under duress.

Section 5. Impact

12. I was 17 years old when I lost my mother. My brother [GRO-B] was 19, my sister [GRO-B] was 12 (nearly 13), my brother [GRO-B] was 10 and [GRO-B] was just 5 years old when our mother died.

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13. The circumstances surrounding my mother's death is something I have thought more about over time. The death of my mother led to huge dysfunction in the family. The ripple effect travelled far. My father (Dad) refused to talk about it which made things difficult. My older brother, [GRO-B], ran away when our mother became ill and in the months before her death and for years after her death, [GRO-B] and I were expected to look after our younger siblings and we were not really capable of it.
14. Dad continued to work and would get home really late. In truth (and apart from taking [GRO-B] to school some mornings) he was hardly there. He locked himself in his room and we rarely saw him. When we did see him he was very critical of us and full of rage. I now think he was chronically depressed and that he might have had a nervous breakdown. He cut all ties with the wider family and with our mother's friends. We were isolated. We were pretty much left to fend for ourselves and it was chaos. There was so much pressure on me to look after my brothers and sister. It led me to being harsh and I became a bit of a bully. If I couldn't control my siblings I was punished by my father and I would hit them to get them to do what they were told. I was in my late teens and I wanted to do other things than minding my siblings and I turned to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism.
15. I, or my sister, would take and collect [GRO-B] from school and take care of him in the absence of Dad. We were supposed to do the washing but I had descended into abusing alcohol and drugs. The house was filthy and squalid. I recall a friend coming over to stay and there being [GRO-B]'s excrement smeared all over his duvet.
16. My education suffered and I was fighting with Dad. I was at college and would sometimes arrive at class drunk. I was in a lot of trouble for the first few months. My teachers then discovered that my mother had died and that I had issues at home and did their best to help. I had one very good teacher and I got through. I was thought of as having a talent for Art and I needed to progress to a foundation course to get into Uni. Instead I wasted a year pretty

much spent sleeping in my bedroom. In retrospect I believe I was depressed. When I did try again the following year, it was too much and I lasted just two months on the course due to the alcohol and drug misuse. I had no organisational skills and no help or encouragement at home. My Dad regularly told me that I would never amount to anything. When I tried to do something for myself, he told me that I was wasting my time. I think it suited him to keep us all close to home. Any self esteem we had was soon dissipated by Dad beating us down verbally and telling us we couldn't do it.

17. My sister [GRO-B] ran away at the age of 16. Dad was from an educated but liberal Muslim background. He thought [GRO-B] should assume a maternal role and take responsibility for the home. We all wanted to escape. We were all arguing. We have without exception suffered in terms of our relationship with each other and with others. There was a lot of psychological bullying and complicated inter-sibling relationships that have resulted in rifts. [GRO-B] gained a lot of weight after our mother's death. He was bullied away from home and he and I don't speak any more because of the level to which he feels bullied by me. He in turn picked on [GRO-B]. He feels ostracised and isolated. He didn't know until relatively recently that [GRO-B] is infected with HIV. We were unable to tell him because of [GRO-B]'s defensive stance on the issue.

18. Stigma is an issue and has been since the death of our mother. We didn't tell anyone how our mother died. People tell daft jokes about people with HIV/AIDS. I don't like it. I am very sensitive to it as is [GRO-B]. [GRO-B] doesn't want people to know that he has HIV and my best friends still don't know. [GRO-B] goes ballistic and has been known to fight or smash things if the subject of HIV is raised. Even something seemingly inconsequential and/or unrelated said by me in [GRO-B]'s presence can lead to an argument.

19. When [GRO-B] became very ill and was hospitalised in his twenties, I would visit him on a daily basis. He was a very difficult patient. Aside from lying in a

hospital bed, he refused to allow the doctors to examine him or undertake tests. My brother was living in a car for a short time at the age of 10. He is very resistant to accepting help. Up until being hospitalised he avoided seeing doctors. He didn't want 'HIV' on his medical records. I was asked by the doctors at the hospital to intervene otherwise [GRO-B] would die. He was subsequently diagnosed with Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma and has also had to deal with some other very serious health issues.

20. My mother and brother being infected with HIV through no fault of theirs has been pivotal to everything. It led to everything going wrong. Our family is left in tatters with relationships strained and dysfunctional. [GRO-B] is left with living with the physical effects of living with HIV and without many life opportunities and options. I would like to see him taken care of.

21. My personal grief for my mother's death was very much belated due to the family situation. This resulted in an extended bereavement process as, once the stress, drugs and alcohol wear off, one is confronted with everything, the guilt, the regrets and just a general feeling of loss, all anew.

22. This is still affecting me now. The consequences are massive. [GRO-B]'s situation is a constant source of stress and worry. One made worse by the fact that I cannot talk to anyone about it, even my own partner, as I have promised [GRO-B] that I would say nothing to anyone. It is particularly difficult as it is always nice to talk to someone when things are preying on your mind.

23. Incidentally and ironically, I am by occupation a Chef. I fell into that occupation as I had to learn to cook for my siblings.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

24. Nobody was offered any counselling or support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. I am unaware of any financial assistance given.

Anonymity

26. I would like to apply for anonymity and I do wish to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed..... GRO-B

Dated.....27th October 2020