

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN4655001

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.
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 in 1986 with my youngest sibling, my brother, GRO-B. 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.
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. I was just 8 years old when she had the blood transfusion. I remember her going into hospital and there was some urgency about it. My father, a medical professional, was working away in the Middle East and I remember, after the transfusion, I overheard my mother crying to him. My father had what I think was a nervous breakdown after my mother died. He didn't want to talk about it but he did say that my mother was extremely upset, vulnerable and weak at the time of the transfusion and that if he had been there she would still be alive now.
7. I do not know how, when or by whom, my mother was told about her infection with HIV.

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 and he was subsequently tested with a positive result.
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 say that if my mother did agree to the transfusion, she did so when she was in a weak and vulnerable state and without my father there present.

Section 5. Impact

12. I was 12 years old when I lost my mother, the day before my 13th birthday. I have four brothers. [GRO-B] was 19, [GRO-B] was 17, [GRO-B] was 10 and [GRO-B] was just 5 years old when our mother died.

13. As stated, our father (Dad) had some form of nervous breakdown when our mother (Mum) died. It was as though Dad was punch drunk from the shock and it led to him making decisions he wouldn't have made if Mum had still been around.

14. Mum was the rock of the family and everything fell apart when she died. I don't remember seeing much of [GRO-B] after Mum's death. They were extremely close, we all were, it was devastating. [GRO-B] adored mum and I feel that he repressed a lot of his emotions. [GRO-B] was so young and innocent himself, it was heart breaking. Dad was working a lot and for long hours and it was down to [GRO-B] and me to run the household. [GRO-B] and I were, in effect, the primary carers of [GRO-B] and [GRO-B]. I would tickle [GRO-B] to sleep at night. I became somewhat of a mother figure to him. We would take turns in walking them to kindergarten and school. After dropping [GRO-B] I would walk miles to get to school myself. Dad was angry and stressed and unapproachable. I didn't want to ask Dad for the bus money, after one morning in his stressed state he threw coins at me. I don't think that Dad

ANONYMOUS

notified the school that we had lost Mum. I was given detention for being late on a regular basis. I remember a teacher being shocked to later learn about my Mum.

15. We were in turmoil at home **GRO-B** and I would cook, clean, wash clothes and try to keep some sort of order. I was resentful about it. At that age I should have been playing with my friends. I was hormonal and just starting to have a period. I was the sole female in the house, alone and without female guidance and support. My mum was my best friend. I helped care for her when she was dying. I used to come home from school and run up the stairs to be with her. I would wash her hair for her and sit and brush it for hours. Mum was honest with me she explained that she was very sick.

16. It was traumatic to watch her waste away. I remember her crying and apologising to me whilst in the bath. She was very aware of how she looked and I must have been looking at her strangely. It broke my heart that she was apologising to me, her daughter, for something that had happened through no fault of hers. Mum wanted to spend as much time as she could with me. We crammed a lot into our time together. I think that she was preparing me. We stayed up together for hours, talking and playing Motown music.

17. Dad's decisions after Mum's death were marred. Within a couple of years, he decided that we needed to move house. Mum was the homemaker and had been our rock. We were still grieving and we were expected to move away from our friends and start new schools. We were removed from our limited support network. Things at home were worse than ever. There were physical fights in the household. It was too embarrassing to contemplate asking friends to the house. I could have achieved so much had I not lost Mum. I left school. I was depressed and I couldn't concentrate. I had been a high achiever at school and I could play the piano. Dad leant on me for emotional support. He told me he wanted to commit suicide. It was taxing. Dad was very possessive of us and wanted us around him all the time. Dad lost control and I ran away just after turning 16 after Dad physically attacked me. I

ANONYMOUS

couldn't take it anymore. Everybody was going off the rails and I had to get away.

18. I had a sense of duty and I felt that I had abandoned my family, Dad also expressed this for many years, but it was the only thing I felt that I could do. I feel angry and cheated at the way my mum was taken away from us. The domino effect it has had on all of us has been immense. The repercussions were horrendous. It led to the breakdown of our family.

19. From being just a young girl I have had to navigate through life on my own. I was an intelligent girl with a lot of potential but I ended up working in a hotel for up to 17 hours at a time and then moving from job to job to survive. I was on rough ground for a while. I lived with a friend for a while. I moved to London and was drinking a lot. I did do some high level PA and admin jobs, but I suffered from a lack of self esteem and I moved on instead of stepping up the ladder. Dad and I had regained contact and we saw more of each other, but he was still very stressed and depressed at times and would talk of suicide sometimes. I travelled intermittently and ended up on the other side of the world living in New Zealand for 10 years to get away and try and start a fresh. I have had no family around me at pivotal times in my life, like when I married and had my two sons. Dad always wanted me back as he continued to struggle with the trauma of Mum's death and difficulties with my brothers. I completely gave up drinking to have my children but also realised it was best to completely abstain for life as it was a negative trigger.

20. I found out that [GRO-B] was also infected with HIV when I was in Australia. [GRO-B] told me. [GRO-B] was angry with [GRO-B] for telling me. He is so sensitive about it. No-one can say 'HIV' in his presence. It has led to more fractures in the family. I cried to learn that [GRO-B] was also infected with HIV. It came as an unbelievable shock. I felt that I had abandoned [GRO-B] when I left home and I am angry that he has not been able to live a normal life. He has had to live in fear, on the edge, physically and emotionally. The stigma lives on today, having to lie to people about how my mother died and not

talking about my brother. It's been hard at times listening to cruel HIV jokes and staying silent.

21. Because of my mother's contaminated blood transfusion, I have developed a mistrust of hospitals and tests. I became very anxious during my first pregnancy. I had a constant fear of something going wrong and having the same experience as her. My eldest son was born by caesarean section and I had a huge panic attack about it. He is now 7 years old. My second son is 5 years old, the same age as GRO-B when he lost his mother. I cannot begin to fathom what it must have been like for my Mum knowing that she was dying and leaving her 5 year old boy behind. In turn knowing how much a 5 year old needs his mummy. It is heart breaking that my children never got to meet their grandmother. Dad developed Parkinson's Disease and now lives in a care home. Now that I am a parent myself, I understand and forgive him for his reaction to my mother's death. He had his life partner, his beautiful wife taken from him.

22. My brothers have trust issues as well. Our mother was taken from us unnecessarily. It is a huge injustice that has evoked anger from everyone. It is astounding to me that it has taken this long to be acknowledged.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

23. No counselling or support was offered to anyone. I sought it out myself later.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

24. I am unaware of any financial assistance given.

Section 8. Other Issues

25. I am making this Statement in memory of Mum and to raise awareness for GRO-B The impact it has had on our family has been enormous. It is

ANONYMOUS

incredible and seems surreal to this day. I want to see **GRO-B** given the help and support that he needs and deserves, particularly monthly assistance for the rest of his life.

Anonymity

26. I would like to apply for anonymity and I do not want 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..... 01/10/20