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Witness Name: **GRO B**

Statement No.: WITN5370001

Exhibits: nil

Dated: 18 June 2021

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 11 May 2021.

I, **GRO B** will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO B** My date of birth is **GRO B** 1947 and my address is **GRO B** I live with my husband of 46 years and I have three children, all of whom are now adults. I am now retired but previously worked as a self-employed mobile hairdresser.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis B (HBV), transmitted via a blood transfusion following a miscarriage. In particular, I will discuss how I came to be infected, the nature of my illness, and the impact it has had on my life.
3. Many of the events I will discuss took place many years ago and I make this statement without the benefit of my medical records. There is much

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I am no longer able to remember clearly and details such as timescales are estimates only.

4. 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

5. In 1971, I suffered a miscarriage. I lost a lot of blood and was taken to GRO B which is now closed. I underwent a dilation and curettage procedure and was given a blood transfusion, though I have no recollection of being told of this at the time.
6. I was discharged and returned home, but I was not at all well, I remember feeling extremely tired and sick. I was not able to eat anything and I had turned a strange yellow colour.
7. Approximately 6 weeks after I was discharged from hospital, my GP, whose name I believe was Dr GRO-D arranged for someone to come to my house to run some blood tests. I recall him saying how my symptoms could be something to do with the blood transfusion I received. The doctor had a big wooden box containing all his equipment it was like something from a film.
8. A short while later – I suppose it must have been several days after – I went to see Dr GRO-D at GRO B for the results. He told me in a very matter of fact way that I had tested positive for Hepatitis B (HBV) and that it was most likely transmitted via the blood transfusion I had been given.
9. The doctor told me very little about the infection itself, the risks it posed and the precautions I needed to take. All I really remember him saying was to avoid dairy products and alcohol. I was told to drink water boiled with pearl barley.

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10. I was provided with no information on infection management and how to prevent transmission of the virus. There was certainly a lack of information and support and I was not provided with any information booklets.
11. I think that the amount of information I was given in relation to the infection and the steps I should take to avoid infecting others was woefully inadequate. I actually found out about the risks of transmission by complete chance, when I picked up a leaflet in the dentist's waiting room.
12. Since then, I have not spoken to any medical professional about my infection with HBV or received any treatment for it. There were no follow up appointments and no further tests to monitor any damage the infection may have caused.
13. To confirm, I have never received blood on any other occasion and have never been an intravenous drug user. I have no tattoos and my ears were pierced professionally before I received a blood transfusion.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. To my knowledge, I was not infected with or exposed to any virus or infection other than HBV as a result of being given infected blood.

Section 4. Consent

15. As previously mentioned, I have no recollection of being told that I was going to have a blood transfusion, it was therefore administered without full consent and without being given adequate information of the possible risks.
16. When tested at home, I did generally consent to the blood tests being undertaken. However, I was not aware that I was being tested specifically for HBV and so could not give my consent for that particular test.

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17. I have received no treatment for my HBV infection and so have not needed to consent to any such treatment.

Section 5. Impact

18. For a while after the initial infection, I experienced symptoms such as jaundice, lethargy and fever. I also remember that my urine was very dark. I suffer with similar symptoms such as excessive sweating and nausea to this day, though I cannot be wholly certain that these are a result of my infection with HBV – no doctor has ever told me that this is the case.
19. After my initial diagnosis, I followed the doctor's instructions and then it was just never really spoken of again. I knew that the infection must have come from the blood transfusion but I am unaware of my current viral load. I have never been offered treatment and my family and I have never been offered subsequent tests to confirm we are all clear. I was told nothing about the potential risks of cross-infection. I think it is this lack of continuing support that has had the biggest impact on me. In a way, being ignorant of the true consequences allowed me to get on with life without worrying, but it is hardly comforting to know that I could have infected others because I was not informed of the risks.
20. I think I would have worried a lot more if I had known the true extent of the risk to others – I did not know anything about it, so I did not worry. I went on to have unprotected sex and more children, which I breast fed as infants after my diagnosis. I could have easily passed the infection on to them because I was not informed of the risks.
21. The biggest impact on my mental health was caused by the stigma of having HBV and I experienced this almost exclusively at the dentist. They would make such a big thing of it all – putting on extra gloves and equipment and so on. It made me feel like a second-rate citizen. They acted as if they were doing me a big honour by even treating me at all.

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22. The period of illness following my infection had a big impact on my work. I was working as a self-employed mobile hairdresser at the time and it was very difficult to force myself to keep up with the appointments. I did wedding and occasion hair and did not want to let people down, despite being unwell.
23. The HBV infection certainly had an impact on my finances, as I just was unable to earn when I was ill. Being self-employed, I had no access to sick pay. If I had been provided full information about HBV and known the risks of transmitting the virus to others, I may not have continued in this line of work. Hairdressing is a very intimate, personal thing and I probably would have worried about infecting my clients. I went on to work in residential care homes afterwards as well, so I also would have been afraid of posing a risk to vulnerable people here had I fully known the risks.
24. I was a single parent at the time of my diagnosis, so it had a big impact on my family life. My mother ended up looking after my daughter a lot, which put a big strain on her. My daughter herself was also greatly affected. She was very young at the time, but it is very easy to underestimate how much they pick up. She was often with me when I had those terrible experiences at the dentist and this clearly had an impact on her; until she was 12, she refused to go the dentist herself.
25. I only told close family about my infection with HBV and therefore faced no stigma within the local community. During the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s, I remember feeling relieved that I did not share my HBV diagnosis within wider circles.
26. I recently saw an article in the local paper about money being set aside for people infected with viruses through blood. I went to see a doctor at my GP, I believe her name was Dr **GRO-D**. She was quite young and would not have been around at the time I was infected. She said, in a

very blasé way, that she had no idea about it. She made me feel very stupid to be honest.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

27. As noted above, I have received no treatment for my HBV. I have not been tested, so I can only assume that I was able to clear the virus naturally. I have suffered with various health issues more recently, such as muscular problems and frequent kidney infections, but I do not know if these are directly related to the HBV infection. Blood tests were carried out to see if the symptoms were thyroid related, but this has now been ruled out by my doctor.

28. I have not been offered any counselling or psychological support as a result of my infection.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

29. I have not applied to any of the financial assistance schemes because, until very recently, I was not aware of them. No medical professional has ever said that I would be entitled to financial support. During my statement interview, I have been provided the details of the Welsh Infected Blood Support Scheme and I will consider contacting them.

Section 8. Other Issues

30. It is shocking to think that I was not told more about the virus and how it is so contagious. There was a serious risk that I could have inflicted harm to my family. That risk all came from the fact that I was not told about the dangers. To infect people is one thing, but to then not tell them about the risks of that infection is almost unforgiveable.

31. I just want to know why the infected blood was used and how this all happened. I know things have moved on a lot and we do a lot more

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investigations these days. But why couldn't it happen then? You just think these tests are done automatically. It is awful to think about the risks that people like me were exposed to. At the end of the day, I know how lucky I was to have not got something worse.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO B

Dated

18 June 2021