

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN6889001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: October 2021

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 1969 and I live at GRO-B I was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus through contaminated blood products.

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

Section 2. How Infected

3. I was injured at the age of 15, playing rugby. My tongue bled for days during which time there was a debate over whether or not I was a haemophiliac. When it was established that I had Haemophilia B (inherited from my maternal

grandfather), I was given Factor IX (FIX) concentrate to enable the injury to heal. I was given the treatment at Eastbourne District General Hospital in or around January 1985. I wasn't given any further FIX treatment until many years later, after I was told that I was infected with HCV, although I have had some FIX treatment since.

4. I was told that I had tested positive for HCV in 1997. By that time the cases of those infected with viruses through contaminated blood products had come to light. I went to see my GP and blood samples were taken by him. I wasn't unwell or showing symptoms of HCV and I didn't know much about HCV. I was given insufficient information to help me to understand and manage the infection after being told of the positive result. I was told that if I had a bleed, I should make sure my blood didn't come into contact with anyone.
5. I was subsequently placed in the care of the Haemophilia Centre at St Thomas' Hospital, London and the information about the long, slow and very serious effect of being infected with HCV started to filter through to me. It was a shocking and frightening thing to have to try to come to terms with. I was offered trial treatment of a combination of Interferon and Ribavirin and the treatment was ultimately successful.

Section 3. Other Infections

6. I do not believe that I was infected with anything other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent

7. I was not pre-warned of the risk of infection before I received the FIX treatment.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

8. After being told that I was HCV positive, my wife and I were tested for HIV/AIDS. We were stressed out of our lives waiting for the result. It was horrendous. I remember sitting with my wife in the waiting room of the Haemophilia Centre and having to ask the doctor at the appointment if he yet had the results of the test for us. His response was to say 'Oh, it's negative. Did no-one tell you?'
9. The Interferon and Ribavirin treatment trial was awful. I was on the treatment for a very long time (what I remember to be 18 months). I had to self-administer the intramuscular Interferon injections three or four times weekly. It was incredibly painful, and I ultimately struggled to find a part of my body not bruised and able to take another injection. My stomach and legs were permanently bruised.
10. I have a demanding job as a secondary school teacher, and I worked throughout my treatment. I don't know how I did it because how I felt was appalling. I was just married and couldn't afford to jeopardise my job and career by being absent. I had to get on with it. I suffered with tiredness and brain fog. Depression was a significant side effect of the treatment and that had a knock-on effect on my relationship with my wife. I gained a lot of weight because I wasn't able to remain physically active and that generated other health conditions for me. Before I was infected with HCV, I was active and quite sporty. During the treatment I could only focus on the treatment and on going to work. My weight gain stayed with me for a long time after the treatment was over. I have ongoing blood pressure issues. I used to suffer with frequent nose bleeds (partly due to my raised blood pressure and partly because of my haemophilia). I had to make frequent journeys to and from St Thomas' Hospital (with the added cost and time spent on the train) to get to my appointments to include the liver checks that were needed for several years post treatment.

11. Notwithstanding the fact that the HCV is now at undetectable levels I use an NHS dentist referred to me by the Haemophilia Centre. Private dentists will not touch me because of the perceived risk. I have also been refused life insurance on my mortgage. I have informed my work colleagues as I believe they need to be aware of it, but it is not something I would tell my students because of the STD connotations.

12. Being infected with HCV has had a profound impact on me and my wife. As stated, my initial positive test for HCV came soon after I was married. The knock-on effect of hepatitis' reputation as an STD, and the physical and psychological effects of the treatment, meant that my wife and I never felt that we were in a position to start a family. That was a huge and heartbreaking decision for us.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

13. There was no counselling or support offered or made available to us.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

14. I received the £20,000 ex gratia payment from the Skipton Fund in the early 2000's. I cannot remember the process and no longer have any of the documentation, but the payment doesn't begin to adequately compensate for the pain and discomfort of the treatment let alone anything else.

Anonymity

15.I seek anonymity and I understand that this redacted Statement will be disclosed for publication to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.

GRO-B

Dated.....

11/11/21