

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN6892001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: December 2021

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** 1948. I live at **GRO-B** **GRO-B** with my husband, daughter and two grandchildren.
2. I was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through a contaminated blood transfusion.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I had a hysterectomy in 1981 whilst under the care of Mr GRO-B Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, at GRO-B North Wales. After the surgery I was told that I had been given a blood transfusion. I was told that I had been given what I remember to be two to three units of blood.
5. I was not told that the blood transfusion was contaminated or that I had been placed at risk of contamination through the transfusion. I was not diagnosed with HCV (or at least informed of the diagnosis) until in or around 1993, by which time GRO-B Hospital had closed.
6. Dr Sheers at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Hospital ran some initial tests and made the diagnosis after I had a seizure at work. I had a stressful job managing a charity for people with disabilities and I had begun to experience symptoms such as tiredness, weakness, difficulty sleeping and difficulty with clear thinking.
7. The Royal Free Hospital, London confirmed the HCV diagnosis. I had a consultation there to discuss the condition, but it was of very limited value. There was no discussion of how to manage it effectively to include the potential for liver damage and no discussion of transmission risks in the home.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. I wasn't infected with anything other than HCV. My husband needed to be tested for HCV after my diagnosis was made. It was good news and came as a great relief to me that he tested negative.

Section 4. Consent

9. I was not pre-warned about the risk of infection through a blood transfusion. When I came around from the hysterectomy, Mr. GRO-B explained to me that they had had to transfuse me with (what I remember as two to three units of) blood. I had no idea that I might have been infected with HCV until approximately 12 years later when tests were run, and I was informed of the diagnosis.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

10. I didn't know what HCV was when I was first told that I had it. I gave it no thought and just carried on. The implications of having HCV were not spelled out to me as clearly as I now know them to be. I was told that there was a possibility that I might develop some cirrhosis over time. I had occasional biopsies and was told that there were signs of a 'little bit of cirrhosis' but not enough to harm me. I was also told that there was an outside chance that I might need a liver transplant at some distant point in the future.
11. It wasn't very long before I came to realise that HCV also carries a significant stigma. My place of work was near to the hospital itself. I knew the people who worked there, and they knew me, and I had to go there for my appointments and for blood tests. It was horrendous. Because of the stigma, my husband and I told no-one except our immediate family. Our daughter was at university at the time, studying for her exams. It affected her and the whole family very badly and it still does.

12. To know that you are infected with something that can be passed on to others makes you feel terrible and is very stressful. I came to learn that if I cut myself, everyone around me needed to be considered whilst I disinfected the area. I then needed to keep myself bandaged up. On one occasion, when I was admitted to hospital on an emergency basis for kidney stones, a notice was placed on the door of the toilet I was using that said 'DO NOT USE, SUBJECT OF CONTAMINATION' or words to that effect. It was a horrible experience and I was in the most horrendous pain at that time.
13. I had several rounds of Interferon treatment in an attempt to clear the virus. I had to inject myself several times weekly. I was always tired, and I had no energy at all. I suffered with insomnia and had terrible brain fog. My mental health took a real downturn and I had to give up work in 1997 at the age of 49. If I hadn't been infected with HCV, I would have continued to work until retirement age (some 15 years later). As well as being physically exhausted, I had no clarity of thought. The weight of it all has had a profound effect on my mental health, leaving me with ongoing anxiety and depression.
14. I was informed in 2003 that I had cleared HCV although I had already sustained significant liver damage (cirrhosis) by this point with varices. Dr Sheers had formerly identified the contaminated blood transfusion as being the source of the HCV infection and he supported my successful application to become a beneficiary (Stage 1 and Stage 2) of the Skipton Fund – which has since been transferred to Velindre in Wales..
15. I have ongoing liver monitoring due to the severity of damage (six monthly scans, endoscopies and medication) under the care of Dr Stern at Aintree Hospital, Liverpool. The Esophageal Varices are active notwithstanding the fact that some of them have been banded/tied up and do cause chronic pain. I have to keep my health on track, and I am always mindful that I could have a

disastrous bleed with them. I have also developed Osteoporosis linked to liver disease and suffer with continued extreme fatigue.

16. Last year I was diagnosed with Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC), type directly caused by HCV, and am under the care of Dr Stern at Aintree Hospital. Since this diagnosis I now have three-monthly scans. I have recently (July 2021) undergone targeted chemotherapy (TACE) and ablation treatment.

17. Being infected with HCV has absolutely ruined my life. It has ruined it in ways I cannot even begin to describe. My husband, daughter and two granddaughters are also hugely and deeply affected with the worry of it. Having liver cancer is a huge factor and it weighs heavily on me every single day. I have been told that there is a strong chance that I have cleared it but no-one in my position can ever be blasé about such a thing. The implications of having such a dangerous form of cancer washes over me every morning that I awaken. I am currently awaiting the results of a very recent MRI and I will continue to be checked every three months. I daren't allow myself to think about it for too long and try to keep myself busy. I suffer with terrible depression and anxiety exacerbated by the cancer diagnosis.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

18. I had successful HCV clearing treatment in 2003 after several attempts. I have had to have a lot of treatment for various complex health conditions as a result of the HCV infection. I haven't had much emotional or psychological support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

ANONYMOUS

19. I am a Stage 1 and Stage 2 Skipton Fund recipient (Velindre). Dr Sheers at Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Hospital was able to identify the contaminated blood transfusion as the source of the HCV infection and supported my application to the Skipton Fund with sworn Affidavit evidence.

Anonymity

20. 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... 13th December, 2021