Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No.: WITN03150001
Dated:

25 FEB 2019

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 22 January 2019.

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

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1946. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am a widowed father of three sons. I was married for some fifty years, never engaged in what could be described as promiscuous sexual activity and have never been an intravenous drug user. I do not have any tattoos. I have always been a 'clean living' man who until I contracted Hepatitis C, was generally fit and healthy.

2. For many years I was employed in the building trade – initially as a contracted bricklayer, then moving 'on-and-up' through the trades to a point

in time where I was contracting for myself. It was a hard, labouring, manual role but as I progressed, also highly specialised. I subsequently moved on to work in a steel works, before taking my last role which was as a site foreman employed by GRO-B

3. I intend to speak of my infection with Hepatitis C (also called 'Hep 'C' or 'HCV'). In particular, the nature of my illness, how it affected me, the treatment I received and the broader impact it has all had on my family and our lives together.

Section 2. How Infected

4. It is my belief that I was infected with HCV in the early 1980's when I was given six pints of what turned out to be contaminated blood during surgery for a burst ulcer.

5. My father had served in the Army and I was raised in such a way as taught me that I 'just had to get on with things,' no matter how challenging – physically, mentally or otherwise – and my upbringing directly influenced my approach to life.

6. On a bank holiday weekend in the early 1980's, I can't now recall exactly when, having experienced considerable discomfort over a protracted period, something I had 'just got on with,' I found myself experiencing pain I finally found unbearable. As it was a bank holiday weekend, I had tried to hold out going to see a doctor until the Monday or Tuesday, but I simply couldn't. In the end, I was taken to The GRO-B Hospital, by ambulance, as an emergency case. I had waited too long before seeking treatment, as that was then 'my way' of dealing with things.

7. When I got to the hospital I was in a poor state. The doctors found that an ulcer sited within my duodenum had burst. I had lost a lot of blood. I can

remember that my stools had been as 'black as tar,' and I had been bleeding through my rectum. I do not know how much blood I had lost, but it was considerable.

8. The doctors had to operate. In order to do so, they 'opened me up' from my belly button or navel to my sternum. I can remember the doctors subsequently telling me, that if they hadn't operated when they did, I would have died as a result of the blood loss. As an integral part of the surgery, I was given what I believe amounted to six pints of blood. I now know that this blood had been contaminated.

9. I found out later from the hospital nurses that I had been lucky, I had, apparently, been operated on by *'the best doctor'* in the hospital. I believe his name may have been either Dr. GRO-B or Dr. GRO-B

10. Following surgery, I was put onto a fluid diet and I recall my having to stay in the hospital for well over a week.

11. When I was discharged, I was given a card which said that as a result of the blood transfusion I had received, and the amount of blood I had been given, my blood group had changed. I cannot now remember the blood groups.

12. I was advised to always carry the card with me, because in the event of an accident though which I may have needed blood, I had to be given blood from the new blood group. I do not believe the card mentioned anything else.

13. Until the issue with the ulcer, I had generally been in good health, had an active, physically demanding job which kept me fit, and looked after myself.

14. A few years after the ulcer surgery I began feeling really unwell. Everyday, by around 2.00 p.m. I would be exhausted. It was extreme fatigue. I went to my local G.P. surgery GRO-B and asked to see a doctor. However, when I explained my symptoms to the practise receptionist, I was told that I

did not need to see a doctor, and instead I was sent to see the surgery nurse.

15. I remember thinking, when I saw it in the surgery, that my medical file was very thick, for a man who with the exception of the ulcer had been 'fit and healthy.'

16. The nurse opened my medical file and told me, *"You know you have a blood virus?"* I was shocked. I can still remember that moment as if it were yesterday. The nurse said that the virus had obviously started to *'take hold,'* and that I would need to go to hospital in GRO-B to start specific treatment.

17. At this stage I was not told what the blood virus was, or that it was may have been HCV. Given that I was in something of a state of shock when told, I do not now remember asking how I may have contracted the virus, or anything I may have been told about it. I don't think I was told a great deal at all, if anything, I was just referred to GRO-B It was only when I went for treatment at the GRO-B Hospital that I was told I had been infected with Hepatitis C.

Section 3. Other Infections

18. I do not believe that I was infected with any other conditions, just HCV. I have not knowingly contracted any other infections, as a result of the HCV, but I believe I have developed a skin condition (itchy skin) as a side effect of my treatment for HCV.

Section 4. Consent

19. To the best of my knowledge I was not told before my surgery that I would require a blood transfusion, but I was then in such a state that I cannot remember. In any event, I do not feel I would have been in a position to have

given consent, and I cannot remember signing anything, or having been given any information.

Section 5. Impact

20. I started treatment for HCV in GRO-B Hospital. I believe it was Nurse GRO-B who saw me – a specialist nurse. She explained to me that I had HCV and that I needed to start treatment with Interferon and some other tablets. I do not remember the names of the tablets.

21. The treatment involved my having to self-administer an injection of medication, at regular intervals, and in the area around my navel. I found the whole process very difficult. I had a lot of muscle strength around my stomach and found the injection painful. I suffered a lot of bruising as a result. During this treatment I had to have weekly blood tests to monitor its progress.

22. I can remember my being very tired throughout this treatment, but as was my way, I just carried on, trying as hard as I could to live a normal life.

23. However, after just three months of this treatment programme, my weekly blood test confirmed that the medication wasn't working, and it was decided to stop. I was told that ongoing research would mean that new medication would become available in the not too distant future, so I was told to wait and see what became available.

24. By this time I found that I could no longer work – I felt like death. I was very sickly and nauseous. I remember having to have an ultrasound scan to determine the extent of damage HCV may have caused to my liver.

25. About eighteen months after I had stopped the Interferon treatment, I was asked whether I would be prepared to participate in a new trial at the GRO-B Hospital in GRO-B, where I would be placed under the care of

a Dr GRO-B. I believe N.I.C.E. had recently approved a new treatment, but I was still going to be a 'guinea pig.'

26. I agreed to take part, but before I was allowed to start, I had to see quite a few departments, and gain their approval – I remember seeing a dentist, a psychiatrist, an optician and a few others I cannot now recall. I think that I was seen in around six different departments in total. I was told the new treatment would be six times stronger and far more powerful than the one I had tried, which had failed.

27. I believe that twelve patients were selected to take part in this trial, people who after review (in the various departments) were considered to be the strongest candidates.

28. I agreed to take part as I felt I had to – I had run out of other options with the failure of the earlier treatment, and lack of alternatives. I wanted to be cured, and additionally knew that had my liver failed, transplants weren't readily available. I was focused on getting better and would have done anything to do so.

29. When I was on this new treatment I felt like a zombie – I had no energy, I was sickly and felt gagged. It was an awful, surreal experience I just cannot describe. I was taking around thirteen pills a day *and* administering an Interferon injection around my navel again. I started to experience lots of unpleasant side effects – I started to get mouth ulcers, I couldn't even take a bath as I had lots of irritable and itching skin . It was unbearable. I had to use Diprobase but even this didn't help. Additionally, my vision was often impaired.

30. I had to visit the hospital in GRO-B quite often, for treatment, but I was being monitored by GRO-B too. Whilst undertaking this trial, I remember receiving text messages telling me or reminding me when to take the tablets – I believe these were sent from or by B.U.P.A. but I'm not sure how or why

they were involved. I was an N.H.S. patient being treated by the N.H.S., not B.U.P.A.

31. One strange aspect of the treatment was that each time I took it, I had to have five ounces of fat.

32. I remember my family were very supportive. Around the same time as I began having treatment my wife GRO-C

GRO-C

GRO-C

33. This was a point in my life were things became unbearable. I continued the treatment determined to get better but felt I was on my own – I didn't have her anymore or any immediate support. We had been together for many years and were looking forward to many more to come.

34. Her loss was a devastating blow I have never got over, and came at a time when I was at my lowest, and unable to adequately look after myself let alone deal with her death, loss and such things as her funeral arrangements. I am a proud man, and found being unable to deal with this extremely difficult, and looking back, still do.

35. My children would often visit me whilst I was ill, especially so following her death. They took over her affairs. One of my children works in insurance and was able to handle that side of things for me. I remember being told that one time they visited, they had found me 'keeled over,' and thought I too had died.

36. The side effects of the trial drugs were horrendous. I experienced a fatigue beyond comparison to that I had suffered before, but I stuck to the programme like clockwork. The programme was scheduled to run for twelve months, but I finished it in eleven when I was told that I was clear of the Hep C, but that there was a possibility that it could still could come back.

37. I stopped having to travel to GRO-B and the regional general hospital in GRO-B took over. I am now under the care of my local hospital in GRO-B My HCV hasn't returned, but they still monitor my liver every three months to determine its condition, having been damaged by Hepatitis C. They also test my blood regularly, taking some seven vials each check-up. I also still have longstanding issues with my liver, and there are three white nodules on it.

38. Despite recovering from the HCV, I still suffer side effects from it. My skin is still quite uncomfortable and I have a lot of issues with 'itching.' I frequently suffer an upset stomach. I have arthritis in pretty much all of my joints. I have had to have one of my knees replaced and the other has had cortisone injections.

39. Hepatitis C entirely changed my life. It saddens me to look at what could have been for my wife and I, and our family. I expected to be looking after *my* children, and it was very difficult for me to ask *them* to take a day off to look after me, to take me to treatment or whatever else I may have needed.

40. Socially, I lost contact with a lot of friends. I used to go out every Saturday night with my wife, and socialise, but after leaving work, until I was clear, I didn't have a social life. I lost my wife during this time too and that brought me down and just added to a sense of isolation.

41. In work, when I had to tell people that I needed blood tests, it would quickly circulate and I would be on the receiving end of some unnecessary remarks. I was quite thick skinned, so I could take it, but it was tough all the same.

42. From a work perspective, I was fortunate to have had a great boss who accommodated me well. Often, in the building trade, people would cut themselves, it was a frequent occurrence and went with the nature of the job. My boss allowed me to take on a more supervisory role. I would often still jump in and play an active role though – it was something I had done all my life. Sitting there and not doing things would make me feel frustrated –

almost like I had had something taken away from me. However, all the time I had to think of the risks associated with my suffering a cut, or the risks others may have seen which weren't actually there, it made it all very difficult.

43. From a financial perspective I was quite fortunate. The company I worked for had a generous sick pay policy and I believe I received my full wages for around six months after I had to stop working. I had previously been working 7 days a week, so I had managed to pay off my mortgage. I was in a highly skilled role too which meant that there had been quite a lot of opportunities for me.

44. My children and wife had also always been in work. We held a strong family work ethic. I had never been on welfare, state benefits, or been out of work since the age of sixteen. I had savings, and dipped into them when I needed to. I am also fortunate to have two private pensions.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

45. I had problems with the arthritis in a knee, resulting in my needing it to be replaced. In the run up to the surgery, I was being seen by a Dr. GRO-B GRO-B at the GRO-B Hospital who was extremely hesitant on the prospect of having to perform major surgery on someone with HCV. That aside, I do not believe that I have had issues getting treatment.

46. I had always been conscious of the need to tell doctors and nurses of my HCV status 'upfront,' as I did not want to risk passing it on to anyone.

47. I have had no counselling or psychological support until the investigator mentioned a service run through the British Red Cross.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

48. I have received assistance from the Skipton Fund after being told of it by Nurse GRO-B in GRO-B Initially I had some difficulty getting on to the system, but another nurse "GRO-B helped me and sent them a letter on my behalf. I think this was around 2009. Skipton gave me a lump sum payment of £3000. The EIBSS took over from them and they have givenme £5000, and I receive a monthly payment of £1500. Following the initial Skipton delay, I have not experienced any further problems.

Section 8. Other Issues

49. I feel we are all victims of this tragedy - we have not been told officially what happened, or why it happened, nor have we received any form of apology. If the authorities responsible simply said that they had made a mistake, and apologised, this would make me happy. I was shocked when I found out the blood came from prisoners in America.

50. I believe the Health Minister of the time, Kenneth Clarke, was under pressure because there was a shortage of available blood, so he made a decision to use blood from elsewhere, despite knowing there was a risk that it could have been contaminated.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed: GRO-B

Dated : 22 2 2019