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Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN0379001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 14th January 2019

24 JAN 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 5th November 2018.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth and address are known to the Inquiry. I am married with two adult daughters and I work on a part time basis at a fibre glass factory. I intend to speak about the fact that I was infected with Hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

Section 2. How Infected

2. In the late 1960s or early 1970s, when I was 17 years old, I had a motorcycle accident during which I severely damaged my right leg; my leg was almost

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severed at the knee and a piece of bone from my leg was found on the roadside.

3. I was taken to Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary where I was given 10 units of blood. I was losing blood at the same speed that I was receiving it.
4. One of the surgeons at the hospital did not think that my leg could be saved but the other surgeon thought that because of my age it was worth trying.
5. During the first few weeks of my admission to Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary I had surgery every week. During these surgeries and my subsequent recovery I estimate that I had roughly 20 blood transfusions. These are the only blood transfusions I have ever received.
6. I was not told about the risks of receiving a blood transfusion. I understand that when I was first admitted to hospital I was not in a condition to have the risks explained to me but they were not subsequently explained. The risks were also not explained before any of my subsequent surgeries and transfusions. Prior to these surgeries I would have been well enough to understand the risks if the information had been provided.
7. I have had a number of illnesses throughout my life as well as serious kidney problems. On one occasion that I wasn't feeling well I went to see my local GP, Dr Sheila Neil, who found that I had high blood pressure and said that additional tests were necessary. It was through these tests that it was identified that I had a damaged liver. I remember that Dr Neil asked me whether I was a drinker. When I said that I wasn't she asked me whether I was "sure." I told her again that I didn't rely on drink but that I did have a drink here and there. She responded by asking me if I was a secret drinker and I had to convince her that I wasn't an alcoholic.
8. Once Dr Neil had decided that I wasn't an alcoholic she told me that she thought I had hemochromatosis. Hemochromatosis is an iron disorder which causes there to be too much iron in the blood. This can cause damage to joints and organs. I was told that if I had hemochromatosis then I would need

to have a bloodletting every month. At that stage Dr Neil wasn't certain of the diagnosis and everything went quiet for a while. It was around this time that the new doctor, Dr GRO-B started and hemochromatosis stopped being mentioned.

9. As time went on my liver functions tests were still showing that my liver was damaged. My wife, who is a nurse, went to the local GP surgery for her own health in early to mid-2009 and during her appointment she mentioned to the nurse that I had received a number of blood transfusions. The information about my blood transfusions must have been relayed to Dr GRO-B, who took over from Dr Neil, because he called me in June 2009 and told me that I needed to go into the surgery and have a Hepatitis C test. Before that phone call I was unaware that the doctors thought I might have Hepatitis C. I wasn't given any information about what Hepatitis C was or what impact it might have on my health or wider life during that call or when I went into the surgery to have the test.
10. I received a telephone call in July 2009, from Dr GRO-B to tell me that I had contracted Hepatitis C. Although I knew I had been tested, the call was still a shock and it would have been nicer to have been told this face to face even though I know that the result would have been the same.
11. I was referred to see Dr Hillary Grieve after my diagnosis. I don't remember her exact title but she was a specialist in blood at Dumfries and Galloway and she was the most helpful doctor that I encountered. She told me that I had contracted the Hepatitis C from the blood transfusions. During that appointment she asked if I had been tested for HIV and I told her that I hadn't. I was tested immediately and called back the following day to receive my results. Although I, thankfully, found out that the result was negative, spending a day wondering whether I had HIV was a horrible shock.
12. The hospital gave me booklets and leaflets on coping with Hepatitis C and in late 2009 I was treated with Interferon and Ribavirin. The treatment was successful.

Section 3. Other Infections

13. I do not believe that I have received any other infections.

Section 4. Consent

14. I do not believe that I have been tested or treated without my consent.

Section 5. Impact

15. After the transfusion (but before I found out about the Hepatitis C) I was very lethargic. I couldn't put a finger on what was wrong but I didn't feel myself. Some days I wouldn't feel too bad but then there were other days where I just couldn't be bothered. I feel like I missed out on a lot with my wife and family because they would want to go somewhere or do something and I just didn't feel great. I didn't want to go out or socialise.

16. After I was diagnosed I had to tell my work and my colleagues about my Hepatitis C. I was working as a Supervisor in a Fibre Glass factory and in this line of work it is fairly common to receive cuts and scrapes. My colleagues needed to know that they had to be careful if I cut myself. I was so embarrassed. If I ever did receive an injury I would just make sure the injury was covered and deal with it myself because I didn't want anyone else to be involved. If I ever got blood on the floor it would have to be cordoned off and treated with bleach.

17. I feel that there is a stigma associated with Hepatitis C. I am fortunate that a lot of my wife's friends are nurses and they understood the nature of my illness and how I contracted it, but the general public are very ignorant when it comes to Hepatitis and connect it to drug use. I didn't want to mix with anyone after the diagnosis because I was too embarrassed to tell anyone.

18. I live 30 miles from my local hospital so going to the hospital for check-ups during my treatment had a significant impact on my life. In the beginning I

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had to go to hospital once a week and then later in my treatment I had to go fortnightly.

19. The treatment (Interferon and Ribavirin) wasn't too bad to begin with, however, as time went on it became horrendous. I had nausea and headaches which meant that I felt like I couldn't even think. I would spend a lot of my time just lying down. I couldn't stop working because I had a mortgage to pay, but as the treatment progressed I found that I couldn't cope and I had to step down from being a supervisor because my concentration was so badly affected, for example I had to focus extremely hard just to complete a simple task like connecting a pipe. The extent to which this affected me was unbelievable.
20. I also suffered from numerous chest infections during the treatment. One of these chest infections, and my health generally, was so bad at one point that the hospital considered stopping my treatment.
21. I said to my wife a number of times that I just couldn't do it anymore. It was her that kept me going. I was prescribed anti-depressants during the treatment which helped a bit but I had such severe sickness in the morning that I would get out of bed and go straight to the toilet. I lost a lot of weight that year.
22. My wife says that my personality has changed since the treatment. My temper has shortened and I would describe myself as crabbier. In addition, the treatment affected my concentration. I now get very tired and I have days where I just can't be bothered but I am someone who always tries to force myself to go on. I have always said that I think Interferon has burnt my brain out. I don't feel the same as I did, my brain isn't as sharp. It feels dull. I know that I have got older and that my concentration and memory may have diminished with age, but I think that it is Interferon.
23. I have not been able to go back to being a supervisor since I had the Interferon treatment and I now work part-time. The fact that I am not a supervisor, work fewer hours and had a lot of time off during the treatment

has had a financial impact. My wife has had to continue nursing for longer than she would have liked in order to pay the mortgage.

24. I have had a number of health problems throughout my life and I do not know whether they are connected to the Hepatitis C. For example, I have always had problems with my kidneys. I would have to have injections of Pethidine at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning just to quiet my kidneys down but they could never find a reason for the problems. I am currently due to see a urologist because I have a kidney stone.

25. I had an ulcer on my leg for about 3 years which just wouldn't heal until about a year ago. Again I do not know if this is connected to the Hepatitis C.

26. I have recently had another liver scan and been informed that my liver has regenerated

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

27. A few weeks after my diagnosis I was told, by the staff nurse at Dumfries and Galloway, that the genotype of Hepatitis C that I had required 48 weeks of Ribavirin and Interferon treatment. Before I received the treatment I had a liver scan but I did not have a biopsy.

28. The treatment required me to take tablets as well as receive injections. Fortunately my wife is a nurse and she gave me the injections. The treatment was successful but had a significant impact on my life. That impact is outlined in section 5 above.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

29. Dr Hillary Grieve who was a blood specialist at Dumfries and Galloway hospital told me about the Skipton Fund and she filled out all of the forms. The only thing that I had to do was obtain a copy of my medical records so that I could prove that I received a transfusion. When I requested my records

I was told that a lot of them had been destroyed and no one had heard of GRO-B which was the convalescence hospital that I went to for my bone graft.

30. We did eventually find enough to prove that I had received a transfusion. I will always remember going in to see the secretary at the hospital and her pulling up a tiny pile of notes. She told us to put stickers on the documents that we wanted a copy of. I found out from the records that had been obtained that I had received plasma as well as blood because I had low haemoglobin.

31. The Skipton Fund told me that I would receive £20,000. I don't really understand how they can put an amount of money on what I went through. After I received that payment I was handed over to SIBSS and received another £30,000. I don't get any monthly payments but I did have to fill in a form recently which asked for my bank details but didn't say what I would receive.

Section 8. Other Issues

32. I do not understand why they didn't conduct tests on people who had received transfusions earlier to see if they had been infected.

33. I will never understand why the blood that I received wasn't tested. The doctors told me that the genotype of Hepatitis C that I had meant that the blood had come from America. I found out that they were taking blood from prisoners and I do not understand how that was allowed to happen.

34. I gave a statement to the Penrose Inquiry. Someone came round to my house to take my statement and then submitted it. Shortly afterwards I received a call which asked me if I wanted to leave in the names of the medical professionals because it was quite incriminating towards Dr Neil. I felt that I had to remove it to avoid causing any friction. The person who took

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my statement also wanted to remove the section of my evidence where I was accused of being an alcoholic.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

22-01-19