

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN0439001

Exhibits: nil

Dated: 5th March 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 26 October 2018.

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/58 and my address is GRO-B Bulgaria, GRO-B where I live alone. I am a single gay woman and have one son.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus (HCV), which I believe I contracted in an NHS hospital via a blood transfusion. In particular, I will speak about the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my life.
3. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I have had 3 major procedures carried out by the NHS in the UK prior to 1991 during which I received blood. I was given no information about possible exposure to infection before any of the operations.

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5. The first procedure was in 1975. I was admitted to Sussex County Hospital because I was bleeding from my vagina. This was caused by the miscarriage of twins. Two dilation and curettage (D and C) procedures were performed on me and I clearly remember being given blood afterwards. I stayed in Sussex County Hospital for a week and was then transferred to Brighton General Hospital for a further week to recover.
6. In 1985 I was given blood at St Thomas' in London following an operation to repair a hernia and an appendectomy.
7. During April 1990 I was taken by ambulance to [GRO-B]
[GRO-B] I was in great pain and bleeding heavily. I was given blood, sedated and subsequently given a hysterectomy.
8. I remember receiving blood on each of these occasions. In the case of my hysterectomy in 1990, I am still in contact with a friend [GRO-B] who clearly remembers that I was given blood, and talking to a nurse about it.
9. I discovered I had been infected with HCV in 2014. I went to [GRO-B]
[GRO-B] in Bulgaria for a biopsy to do with my Crohn's disease, and my blood was tested.
10. The senior nurse questioned me in a very matter of fact manner, 'you do know you have HCV'. The shock was immense and I could not believe it. I was given no further information, other than that I had HCV. I was not informed of the risk of infecting others. I had thought that the symptoms I was experiencing were due to Crohn's, when in fact they were to do with my liver function. This made it even more of a shock to find out that I had been infected with HCV.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. As far as I am aware, I have not received any infection other than HCV as a result of being given infected blood.
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Section 4. Consent

13. I have not been treated for HCV without my consent.
14. I have always given consent to have my blood tested, but I did not give consent for my blood to be tested for HCV specifically.

Section 5. Impact

15. I recall being profoundly shocked when I was diagnosed with HCV. I had been admitted to hospital for a biopsy due to Crohn's at the time I discovered. I could not believe it and I arranged to be tested again. I was sure there had been a mistake but sadly not, I did indeed have HCV.
16. At the time of the diagnosis I was unaware of the infected blood scandal, so spent a number of months worrying about how I became infected. I have never been an intravenous drug user and had not had any kind of sexual relationship with a man for over 30 years. In a way, finding out about the infected blood scandal was a relief as it provided an explanation of contraction. For me no other possible source of infection existed.
17. Psychologically being infected with HCV has had a profound effect on me, causing periods of depression and anger.
18. Physically I now have spells of extreme fatigue where I can hardly get out of bed. My Crohn's disease has become very bad in the last few years and I have been hospitalised twice. I am sure this is related to the HCV infection.
19. I have worked hard all my life and always had a dream of retiring to a small house in the country and to have animals around me. I have achieved this in Bulgaria, where I have a nice small house overlooking a valley and have two horses, five dogs and two cats. I have become fluent in Bulgarian and have many Bulgarian friends in the village. My dream is complete and now it could be ripped away from me.

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20. I have a close and open relationship with my son and we have never kept secrets from each other. However I have been unable to tell him that I have HCV, and this eats me up inside. I have two grandchildren but am always afraid to visit them because of my infection.
21. My doctor now recommends that I have my liver tested every month but I do not do. I find it too distressing and expensive.
22. I have also suffered from pancreatitis recently, thought to be caused by my HCV infection.
23. I do not drink or smoke and am a vegetarian. I really should not be suffering from an enlarged liver but I am because of the negligence of the government.
24. I have never experienced any financial, educational or work related effects as a result of being infected with HCV, as I have not told anyone of the infection.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

25. I am not being treated for HCV and have received no care or support, although it has been recommended by my doctor that I have a liver function test every month.
26. In Bulgaria I would need to pay for the treatment, which I cannot afford. One of the reasons in applying for compensation was to be able to afford treatment.
27. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

28. I have received no financial assistance at all.

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29. I became aware of the EIBSS in 2017 via my friend [GRO-B] so attempted to get copies of my medical records from England. I contacted the hospitals I was operated at as well as the NHS Primary Care Support Service in [GRO-B]. I was shocked to find that all of my hospital records had been either lost or destroyed.
30. My GP records that I received from [GRO-B] were very poor, consisting of a few pages with hardly any detail at all. In regard to the operations where I received blood, there was only one line to say that I had a hysterectomy. The other operations were not mentioned at all.
31. In spite of the non-existent medical records I made a claim for the HCV Stage 1 payment to the EIBSS, Skipton House, London.
32. The claim was rejected on the basis that I had no proof (medical records) of receiving blood from the NHS.
33. I appealed against the decision, including a sworn statement from witness [GRO-B] who was present when I was admitted to [GRO-B] Hospital in 1990 and saw that I was given a blood transfusion [GRO-B] provided an affidavit, having sworn an oath that this was true. I also provided a 'statement of truth' that I had been given a blood transfusion.
34. Despite the affidavit and statement of truth the appeal was also rejected on the grounds that I did not have the required medical records, which of course the NHS had lost. It seems that two sworn witnesses statements might be enough to convict a murderer, but are not enough proof to convince the EIBSS.
35. I wrote a complaint letter to the EIBSS, as it was an obvious flaw people without medical records could not successfully make a claim for compensation for the failures of the NHS. I felt that this should have been made clear on the EIBSS website. The process of making the claim for compensation involved extra costs and unnecessary stress, when my claim was doomed to fail from the start.

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36. The EIBSS replied to state that although it was more difficult to make a successful claim without medical records, it was still possible. Nevertheless they affirmed they would update their website to reflect this. To date no change has been made.
37. I was not satisfied with the response so wrote a freedom of information request to see how many claims have been approved in the case where medical records have been lost or destroyed. The EIBSS have not replied to this request.

Section 8. Other Issues

38. I find it hard to express my anger towards the government on this issue. What truly makes my blood boil is that the government, through their own incompetence infected people with a life threatening illness. They then conveniently 'lost' the medical records to prove this and refused to believe what the people they have infected say.
39. The EIBSS has effectively accused me of lying about how I contracted my illness, which I regard as unforgivable as being infected by the NHS in the first place.
40. The burden of proof should be shifted when making a claim. Rather than the infected person proving that the NHS infected them with HCV, it should be on the NHS to prove otherwise. This would make more sense, as the government is responsible for keeping the records that determine the source of the infection. They have failed to hold medical records for those infected.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____

GRO-B

Dated 05/03/2019