

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN3395001

Exhibits: WITN3395002 - 003

Dated: July 2019

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** of **GRO-B**.
My date of birth is the **GRO-B** 1972. I am single and I currently live on my own.
I am not working at the moment as I have been signed off sick.
2. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Infected

3. In or about **GRO-B**, I experienced pains in my bottom and thighs and I was told I had ingrown hair/cysts. I was diagnosed at **GRO-B** with **GRO-B** for which I needed a simple operation. On the day of my operation, the surgeon made a terrible mistake and had not realised that he had cut my artery.
4. The operation was such that I could not get stitches as it would have left an air pocket in my wound. I was therefore left on the ward to bleed to death. The

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nurses never carried out any wound checks as that kind of task was not on their specifications at the time.

5. During visiting times, in the evening, my mother found me unconscious and pulled back the bed sheets to find a pool of blood. They called the sister of the ward who contacted the surgeon who performed the operation and he refused to return to the hospital so a locum was sent.
6. When the locum arrived, he had to operate on the ward bed as the operating theatres were all unavailable at the time. No blood products were available at this hospital so they gave me bags of alternative blood clotting products instead, but I do not know what exactly these products were and no member of staff at the hospital would tell me. Whatever I had been given was a temporary fix to stop me from bleeding to death. Meanwhile, the locum tried to find the bleeding artery to tie it off, however he was not a surgeon so he spent several hours doing this.
7. As I lost a lot of blood, Loughborough Hospital transferred me to Leicester Hospital (LH) (eight miles away) for a blood transfusion.
8. I was taken to LH via an ambulance and my parents followed behind me. When I arrived I recall signing a form before I had the blood transfusion. However, I cannot recall what I signed. In any event, I was underage and therefore did not have the capacity to sign anything. My parents were not aware that I signed any documents, as they were late arriving at the hospital because my father's windscreen broke. The doctors should have approached my parents to sign the document.
9. When I reached LH, I was put on several drips. I had gone to the bathroom, but fainted and split my head open. Staff found me bleeding and I was given the blood transfusions in the absence of my parents. I have a list of batch numbers which I obtained from LH. A copy of the letter with the batch numbers is exhibited at 'WITN3395002'.
10. When my parents arrived, they were distraught that the hospital had left such a decision to a minor.

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11. After that operation, I was in the hospital for six weeks in order to recover.
12. Prior to receiving contaminated blood products, I was not informed of the risk of being exposed to infections and neither were my parents. Even after we had figured out the risk for ourselves, no one owned up or apologised. Some of the sisters on the ward even went to the same school as my parents, yet everyone remained silent.
13. In or around GRO-B, my ex-partner went to the dentist and he was told that he had an abnormal mouth infection. The dentist recommended that he should go to the hospital and be tested for HIV. He had the blood test and was told that he tested positive for it. As a result of my partner's blood test result I was prompted to get tested myself. I underwent a HIV test at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington and I was called back for a consultation and I was also told that I had tested positive for it.
14. When I was in my teens I was always in poor health. Within a few years of the operation, I had glandular fever, bad bouts of flu, tonsillitis and rashes. I had a constant cold and never understood why my symptoms lasted that long. I now believe that the above symptoms were as a result of the HIV. The hospital had not suspected that I had HIV.
15. I therefore believe that I was infected with HIV as a result of the blood transfusion that I had and also possibly from the blood products that I was given.
16. I believe that I was not given adequate information to help me manage or understand the infection. It was not discussed how I could have contracted the HIV, instead I was offered counselling so that I could discuss how I was coping, but I would have preferred it if they had provided me with information on what I should expect for the future and there was talks about medication. I do strongly believe that I contracted the HIV through either the blood transfusion or the blood products that I was given.

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17. My ex-partner did attend the hospital a few years before I was diagnosed because of his bunion. I believe he had an operation and I am not sure if his blood was tested, but if it was I believe he would have been told that he had HIV.

18. I was not given any realistic time frames about the infection and the information that I was given was very little. The doctor's approach to the HIV status was a 'take each day as it comes' attitude.

19. I believe that the hospital knew about the infection before I was tested and therefore I should have been told earlier.

20. I did not test positive for Hepatitis C; however I had a booster injection recently as I did not have enough antibodies. I do not know if I had Hepatitis because I was never formally diagnosed.

21. More recently I have been attending the Royal Free Hospital (RFH) in London for treatment.

Section 3. Other Infections

22. As far as I am aware, I do not believe I was not infected with anything else other than HIV. All of my other health conditions, I believe are as a result of my weakened immune system caused by the HIV.

Section 4. Consent

23. Not long ago, it was mentioned in the media that the RFH had retained samples of blood given to them by several patients over the years and were testing them for research purposes. This was without our knowledge and consent. As a result, and only after it had become public knowledge, the RFH issued letters to their patients asking for a formal consent that we were happy for them to use our blood samples for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

24. As previously stated, I spent most of my teenage years in poor health. Within a few years of the operation, I had glandular fever, bad bouts of flu, tonsillitis and rashes. I had a constant cold and never understood why my symptoms lasted that long. I believe that the above symptoms were as a result of the HIV.
25. Mentally, I have been extremely impacted. I have suffered from depression as a result of the infection and as a result of the medication that I had. I was given anti-depressants and continue to take them.
26. Soon after my diagnosis I became ill with hidradenitis which caused my pores to close and clog up causing a horrendous skin condition. I attended the hospital and I was placed in an isolation room for weeks. I also had herpes and shingles and I believe they were as a result of the HIV infection. Furthermore, I had a heart failure and I have been diagnosed with underactive thyroid both of which I believe are linked to the infection.
27. In GRO-B, I was admitted to the RFH to have a GRO-B GRO-B which was discovered via a head x-ray. In that operation, I had my tonsils and adenoids removed. Overall I have had to spend a considerable amount of time in and out of hospital.
28. As a result of having a weak immune system, I have an underperforming heart. When I attended the heart clinic at the RFH, the heart specialist asked me if I was sure that I did not have another chronic long term infection. I told him that I only have HIV. According to the doctor, a person with HIV, on average, is likely to develop heart issues fifteen years sooner than those without the infection. This makes it more likely that I will have a stroke or heart attack sooner than an average healthy person.
29. I have been on antiretroviral medication since GRO-B for HIV. I started treatment just after I had a GRO-B removed because I was told that my CD4 count were low. Since then I have had a cocktail of different drugs to find the

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combination most compatible for me. I now take Darunavir and Truvada, which I was given at the start.

30. Prior to being prescribed antiretroviral medication for the HIV, the hospital initially wanted to wait until my CD4 count was at its lowest. All of a sudden this position changed and they said it was best to start treatment as soon as possible.
31. The hospital attempted to change all the antiretroviral drugs from branded products to generic ones in order to save costs. I had to beg them to put me back on the drugs I was comfortable with. The generic drugs did not agree with my body. Thankfully, I found a doctor at the RFH who was willing to listen and put me back on the drugs which worked for me. I believe this was the NHS's attempt at saving every penny they could.
32. Throughout the course of taking various tablets I experienced several symptoms such as insomnia, constipation, osteoarthritis due to weakened bone density, yellow pigmentation of the skin and gastric problems. The first tablets I took triggered my depression and this was when I started taking antidepressants.
33. I am also taking medication for my other conditions including heart failure and thyroid disease, none of which I had previously. I believe that the sheer volume of drugs has contributed to all of my additional health issues. I am waiting to have a hip scan as I have cysts around my thyroid gland. In addition to this, I also have nerve damage in my neck.
34. Having HIV ended my long term relationship. My partner and I were together for many years and as a result of the infection our relationship was ruined. To this date, he still blames me for the infection. My partner has never been as sick as me and I have had the virus for far longer than him.
35. Since then I have tried meeting other people, however I do not feel that I can commit to a relationship because of the infection. The infection has held me back from developing a meaningful and loving relationship. In addition to my private life, when I told my father that I had been infected with HIV, he had a

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heart attack the following day and I believe it was because of the shock of the news. My mother thought I should not have told him at all and kept it to myself.

36. Up until recently, the stigma surrounding HIV was dreadful, so for the most part of my life I have kept it private. I only told those close to me and my employers at work. When I was diagnosed I told my boss and I wanted to keep it between us. However, he then told the area manager and as a result I felt so stigmatised that I felt coerced to quit.
37. When I had the blood transfusion in or about GRO-B I had just left school, and was midway through my BTECH studies. I had also started my first work experience and both that and my course had been ruined because of my poor health. At the time, I did not know that the symptoms that I had suffered were as a result of the HIV.
38. I felt that I was pushed out of work as my boss couldn't handle the fact that I was HIV positive. When I was diagnosed, I was a senior manager for GRO-B GRO-B for a long time. I had to listen to everyone's problems all day long and sort them out as well doing my day-to-day job in running the store so my role was very important. I had been in and out of jobs after working for GRO-B but due to ill health, I have not been able to stay in a long-term employment. I am currently signed off sick with multiple illnesses.
39. Financially, being out of work has had a massive impact on me. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) insist that there is nothing wrong with my health and therefore I was denied benefits. I have appealed this decision since and awaiting their decision.
40. Due to the lack of income, I fell short on my financial commitments, such as bills and credit debts. My debts accumulated and three years ago I had to get a debt management plan set up and had to apply for a Debt Relief Order.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

41. As stated above, counselling was offered to me in consequence of being infected. However, I did not find that it helped. It was mainly led by me discussing how I was handling the situation.

42. The hospitals still do not tell you what to expect and wait for the symptoms to happen. I was falsely led to believe that I would be okay for a very long time, but I have been sick all the time. A proper prognosis would have helped. I would like to have been told that my condition could potentially be as bad as it is now.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

43. I have not been offered any form of financial assistance and have not received any money from any of the funds or trusts that have been set up.

44. I made an application to the DWP and received a letter from them stating that the supporting medical information I had submitted provided insufficient evidence to prove that a blood transfusion took place. They claimed that the batch numbers corresponded to numbers of donees to whom I had donated my blood too. I have never donated blood. A copy of this letter, dated 10 October 2018 is exhibited at 'WITN3395003'.

45. I know a lady who works for the Colindale NHS Blood Transfusion Unit and she was able to tell me that the letter was written to me by a junior employee. I was able to appeal the decision but the deadline had passed because I was waiting for my medical records. I was told I would have to start my application again.

Section 8. Other Issues

46. I have applied for my medical records from LH and have received a reply stating that all paper medical records have been destroyed in line with the NHS policy, but they have managed to give me the batch numbers of the blood transfusions that I received.

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47. Using the list of batch numbers, I decided to fill out a complaint as was advised by the NHS Business Services. Unfortunately, the RFH, who I am currently under for the HIV treatment, is silent on discussing this with me. They made false promises to give me letters confirming my diagnosis and my doctor, who I have been seeing for fifteen years, ignores me.

48. I have applied for my medical records from Loughborough Hospital as I was given blood clotting products before I was transferred to L.H. Unfortunately they informed me that my records were destroyed in a flood. I wanted to know what blood clotting products I was given.

49. I have been informed that my GP records have gone missing as well. I have chased my GP in London on numerous occasions, and I only have access to the medical records for the last three years.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

50. I would like to apply for anonymity.

51. I do not want to give oral evidence.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed..

GRO-B

Dated

24/7/19