

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name **GRO-B** (Anonymous)

Statement No: WITN41330001

Exhibits: WITN4133002 - WITN4133003

Dated: 24 March 2021

## 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 20 July 2020.

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

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B**. My date of birth is **GRO-B** 1964. I reside at **GRO-B** **GRO-B** Essex, **GRO-B**. I married my husband **GRO-B** in 2001. We have two children. My eldest son is **GRO-B** years-old, and my youngest son is **GRO-B** years-old. I am currently employed as an Office Manager at the **GRO-B**.
2. I intend to speak about my mother **GRO-B: M**'s infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of how she had learnt about her infection, and how the illness had affected her and our family thereafter.
3. Mum married my father **GRO-B** approximately 1956, and she has seven children and twenty-one grandchildren. Her date of birth is **GRO-B** 1937 and her date of death is **GRO-B** 2020.

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4. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. For family reasons I am seeking anonymity for my statement
5. The Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and I understand that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
6. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories can fade. I have been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However, these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates.
7. I have constructed this statement without access to my mum's medical records.

### **Section 2. How Affected**

8. From a very young age, mum had suffered with arthritis through-out her life. Her first operation associated with her arthritis was when she had a plate placed into her hips in 1949 when she was aged approximately twelve years old. I am unaware of the exact hospital she had this operation in, but she lived in Kent at the time.
9. Thereafter, from 1951 or 1952 until her death in 2020, mum had over eight other operations at Basildon Hospital and GRO-B hospital, GRO-B GRO-B During which, she had pins and plates placed into her hips.
10. During one of the operations previously mentioned, mum had received a blood transfusion as treatment for the blood she had lost during the surgical procedure. The time period in which she received this blood transfusion was in the 1970's.
11. It is myself and my family's belief that this blood transfusion she had received contained a contaminated batch of blood, which as a result, was the cause of my mum's HCV infection. However, as I was very young at this point, I cannot say with certainty which blood transfusion she had received was the cause of mum's HCV.

12. I have recently obtained Mum's Skipton Registration Form and accompanying documents. Upon closer inspection of these documents, it has come to light that it is believed by mum's General Practitioner ("GP") Dr [GRO-B] at [GRO-B] Centre, [GRO-B] that the cause of her HCV was a blood transfusion received in the 1980's, either at Basildon Hospital or [GRO-B] Hospital (**WITN4133002, Page 9**).
13. Therefore, as a result of this discovery, it is debatable as to which blood transfusion it was that infected her with HCV.
14. I cannot pass comment on whether any information or advice was provided to either my mum or my father beforehand of the risks associated with being exposed to infection as a result of receiving a blood transfusion. As I was very young at this point, I am unaware of this fact. I have also not asked my parents about this fact thereafter.
15. Around the late 1990's when mum would have been aged around fifty or sixty years old, she was diagnosed with HCV Genotype 3. I cannot pass comment on the events leading up to mum's diagnosis, at what point she was diagnosed, or why she was even tested or the information she was provided. I have no idea how she was told or who told her. I was still young at this point, and I never asked my parents about this.
16. Additionally, I cannot pass comment on whether the information my mum was provided with when she was diagnosed would have been considered adequate for her to have understood and managed her infection.
17. I cannot pass comment on whether my mum's diagnosis should have been provided at an earlier point. I can only assume that my mum was diagnosed with HCV as soon as the medical professionals had become aware.
18. The first point that I became aware of mum's infection, was when she had told me that she was getting £20,000 from the Government for her HCV. Before this, I

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cannot say that I had become aware of her infection. I had noticed that she would constantly feel under the weather and have belly ache after bellyache. As far as I am aware, the Hospital did not get to the bottom of this that said, she had several exploratory examinations down her throat.

19. My brothers and sister were not given information by the medical profession on the risk to others being infected as a result of her infection. However, looking back, I can recall having been told by mum around the late 1990's that we were not to touch her blood if she ever had a cut or a bleed. Also, we were not to get our toothbrushes mixed up with hers. I cannot recall the manner in which she had told us not to do these things, but mum would have had the conversation with my siblings and my father on these preventative measures.
20. Therefore, mum must have been told by her doctor about the risks of others being infected with HCV, but to the extent of what this information consisted of, I cannot pass comment.
21. No member of my family has been tested for the presence of HCV as a result of mum's diagnosis.
22. Mum did not have tattoos, she was not an intravenous drug user, and she did not have dental treatment outside of the United Kingdom. Whilst mum had her ears pierced, this was conducted in a clinical setting with sterilised equipment.
23. In the year leading up to mum's death on GRO-B 2020, she was admitted to Basildon Hospital on numerous occasions as her health had started to deteriorate. She experienced heart failure and her legs had started to swell, she had excess fluid.
24. During this period, she received two blood transfusions as treatment, which we believed had helped aid her recovery as she was discharged to go home on every occasion.

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25. It was only after mum was released from hospital in early 2020 that we had started to notice that she had developed large open ulcers on her legs. We were told that this had occurred as a result of mum's heart failure. Fluid was unable to move throughout her body properly which had caused pressure on her legs.
26. As mum could not get to the hospital due to the pain she was experiencing from her ulcers, over a short period of time they got worse. I had numerous arguments with the medical staff at **GRO-B** Health Centre over the telephone to arrange home visits for Mum as I was on holiday at the time. I managed to get home of the Area Manager for Nurses and she sent out of a nurse straight away.
27. However, on 14 February 2020, mum was alone at home when she had a fall. A couple of hours later, my sister found my mum on the floor and called the ambulance. When the Paramedics arrived at her home, they put her back in bed so that she could rest. My view is that she should have been taken straight to hospital that evening.
28. The next morning, on 15 February 2020, my Sister went around to mum's house to check on her health and wellbeing. It was at this point that she noticed that mum's ulcers on had got worse. The scar tissue on her hips had also burst and she had large amounts of weeping yellow puss coming from them, which we can only describe this as being poisonous fluid, pus.
29. My sister decided that mum needed to go to hospital as soon as possible for treatment, so she telephoned for an Ambulance. When mum arrived at Basildon Hospital, she was admitted to a ward, which dealt with bone problems as the doctors had suspected that she had broken her hip during the fall she had experienced on 14 February 2020.
30. When I got back from holiday on 19 February 2020, I went straight to Basildon Hospital to visit mum. It was at this point after our discussion with the doctors that it became apparent that she would be receiving palliative care.

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31. Shortly after mum's admission it became apparent that the likelihood of her coming home according to the doctor we spoke to was non-existent as she was very ill.
32. Later on, as the days went on, we received mixed messages from the doctors such as "what does mum need to go home with?" There appeared to be no continuity in what each doctor was telling us.
33. The nurses in charge of mum's care would say something along the lines of "what does mum need to go home with?" We did not think that mum was well enough to be discharged to home, so why would they ask questions such as this? We would repeat this question to the doctor, who would also confirm our belief that she was in fact not well enough to go home.
34. Also, when the nurses came around the ward with the lunch trolley, they would make comments such as "what is mum having for lunch today?" I would look at them with confusion. The nurses would have known that mum cannot eat as she was too ill, so why would they ask?
35. It was actions such as this that made me question the standard of care she was receiving at Basildon Hospital. If they could forget something minor as whether mum could eat, then what else are they forgetting with regards to mum's care? I can only imagine.
36. It was for the aforementioned reasons that my family were not prepared to leave mum alone for longer than necessary in Basildon Hospital, as she could not speak. She would not have been able to tell the nurses if she needed a drink or to go to the toilet, so we would try to stay at the hospital for as long as we were able to.
37. I can recall one incident on either 23 or 24 February, where my niece had gone to visit mum at hospital when a nurse came up to her and very abruptly told her that she needed to leave. She was stunned. Our family had always been told by the senior doctor that we were welcome to stay with mum for as long as needed, which was the opposite of what she had just been told by the nurse.

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38. In any case, my niece did not want to leave mum as she felt that she would not have received the care she would have otherwise needed. However, she did as she was asked by the nurse and started packing up to leave the hospital. Before she was about to leave, she checked over mum to see if she needed anything. She had noticed that mum had messed herself, so luckily my niece checked before she had left as who knows how long she would have been left in that state otherwise. My niece then rang us to tell her what had happened.
39. As my niece was leaving the room where mum's bed was situated, the nurse who had told her to leave came back into the room and started shouting at her. The nurse said something along the lines of "how dare you ring your family and complain about the care I am giving your mum." My niece was stunned by what she had said so she left Basildon Hospital as planned.
40. The next day, which I can only assume was around 24 or 25 February 2020, mum was moved to the Laindon Ward within Basildon Hospital. The care she received within this ward was completely different. When a nurse carried out her initial observations on my mum after she was admitted to the ward, she took one look at mum and had told us that she was going to move her to a side ward. I can only assume this was due to mum looking very poorly.
41. Throughout the duration of mum's stay in Basildon Hospital she was put on a drip in an attempt to replace the fluids she was lacking. They also gave her steroids through the oxygen mask to try to open up her airways. At one stage the doctors thought they were going to feed mum through a tube but they quickly realised there was little point.
42. However, despite the treatment she had received, on GRO-B 2020, the doctor who was in charge of mum's care came to visit us. I immediately knew that it was not going to be good news. The doctor told us that there was nothing else they could do for mum and that we should ring all of our family so that they could come to the hospital to say their goodbyes.
43. On GRO-B 2020 mum passed away at Basildon Hospital.

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44. After mum's death, we were told by Basildon Hospital that the Coroner would need to carry out an investigation into the cause of her death. This could take up to a maximum of one month.
45. Myself and my family made the decision to bury mum on **GRO-B** 2020 with F E J Green and Sons Funeral Directors, 95-187 Timberlog Lane, Basildon, SS14 1PJ. We were told by the Funeral Directors that we were unable to see mum's body due to the affects her HCV had on her body. Not being able to see her body was the biggest thing for us as we felt that we could not say goodbye to her properly. I still find this very upsetting.
46. It was around the 23 March 2020 that Great Britain was placed into the first lockdown due to Coronavirus, so there were restrictions on the number of people who were able to attend the funeral. This was awful as we had such a large family. It was heart-breaking at the thought of telling the grandchildren that they were unable to attend their Nan's funeral. We were unable to use the church for her funeral as it was closed, so we had to stand by her grave side for the service. Luckily, this meant that thirty people were able to attend Mum's funeral.
47. Notwithstanding that the death of my mum was very recent, the fact that she passed away through the other medical complains she had, HCV did not sit very high up on the list as the cause of her death. If mum would have developed cirrhosis of the liver as a result of her infection, then maybe this would have suggested that her infection had a greater effect on the cause of her death. She was eighty-three when she died so she lived a very long life.
48. I exhibit below mum's death certificate at **WITN4133003**, which sets out the cause of her death:



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- 1(a) Type 2 Respiratory Failure
- (b) Hospital Acquired Pneumonia and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (joint cause)

II Left hip prosthetic joint infection, Hepatitis C and Atrial Fibrillation.

### **Section 3. Other Infections.**

49. I do not believe that mum received any other infection or infections other than HCV as a result of being given contaminated blood. I also do not believe that she was tested for any other blood borne viruses as a result.

### **Section 4. Consent**

50. As far as I am aware, when mum was under the age of eighteen-years-old, my grandparents would have provided fully informed consent for either testing or treatment she had received.

51. Beyond this point, mum would have been expected to provide consent for treatment or testing from the age of eighteen, of which I believe that she would have provided consent.

### **Section 5. Impact.**

#### **Mental/Physical Effect.**

52. I cannot say to what extent my mum's HCV had impacted on her mental and physical state. Mum was not one to complain and she would not have told you if she was in pain or she was having difficulties.

53. As far as we are aware, mum's mental state did not suffer as result of her HCV infection. Although within the last three years prior to her death she had begun to become a bit spiteful and her memory had started to deteriorate, I cannot say to what extent this was attributed to her old age or to her HCV.

54. Mum had always struggled throughout her life as there was always something wrong with regards to her health from an early age. She would have constant pains in her stomach and she had low levels of Iron due to her anaemia. Whilst the doctors tried to diagnose what was wrong with her at the time, they never got to the bottom of her ill-health.
55. Every year from around the late 1990's I would take mum to Basildon Hospital to have blood tests and liver tests. I do not believe that she had ever undergone an invasive liver biopsy. Mum always told me that all the results of her liver scans had come back as negative, and that she had not been diagnosed with cirrhosis of this liver.
56. For this reason, we cannot say for certain what impact mum's HCV had on her health, but nevertheless, she managed no matter what.

#### Treatment

57. I am not aware that my mum had undergone treatment to clear her HCV infection. I do not believe that she was ever offered any treatment. She only ever took tablets for her arthritis.

#### Impact

58. My mother and father got married quite young when they were aged around seventeen or eighteen years old. Soon after, they moved into their first house. They remained in this house until my father passed away in 1987 at the age of sixty-six-years-old due to lung cancer, and my mum's death on GRO-B 2020.
59. When mum was diagnosed with HCV my father was very much involved with the family. However, he was a very private person. I cannot recall having a conversation with my father about anything, so I therefore cannot say to what extent my mother's infection affected my father. I note that in mum's Skipton Registration Form (**WITN4133002, Page 7**) it states that mum was diagnosed with

HCV in 2000. This is inaccurate. It is not my mother's writing, dad knew about mum's HCV infection prior to his death in 1997.

60. When my mum had her last operation on her hips, she was placed onto crutches so she was unable to work. However, as my father was employed for the majority of his life, I cannot say that her HCV had a financial impact on the family.
61. I do not believe that mum experienced any stigma associated with her HCV. She was very much a person who would tell us "just get on with it. It is what it is." Therefore, I cannot pass comment on this fact. If she had, then I was not made aware of this.
62. Personally, I have felt quite embarrassed about my mum's HCV when I tell people about it. I have always felt the need to justify her infection and the way in which it was contracted even to this day. I would always tell people "don't worry, it is not AIDS." I can only say that this is associated with the knowledge Society had on the prevalence of AIDS at the time, so it was an automatic reaction.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

63. I do not believe that mum faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care and support as a consequence of being infected with HCV.
64. In the year leading up to mum's death on **GRO-B** 2020, she was under the care of her GP Dr **GRO-B** at **GRO-B** Health Centre. I believe that the general treatment she received at **GRO-B** Health Care was great. I cannot criticise the care she received.
65. Additionally, as previously mentioned, throughout this period, mum was also admitted to Basildon Hospital on numerous occasions. Whilst I cannot say that the medical staff treated her any different to the other patients under their care, whenever she was kept at the hospital for treatment, she was always placed in a side ward. The nurses and doctors would also always wear gowns and gloves

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when they treated her. I cannot say whether these actions were as a result of her HCV infection, or these were worn for other purposes.

66. I do not believe that mum's infected status impacted upon the treatment, medical and/or dental care she received. She was also not refused treatment as a result of her HCV. If she had, then I was not made aware of this.

67. As far as I am aware, neither mum, myself, or any member of our family were offered counselling or psychological support as a result of her HCV diagnosis. We were also not offered counselling or psychological support as a result of her death.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

68. In 2004, mum received an ex-gratia payment of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund. I can only assume that it was my sister who applied for financial assistance on my mother's behalf.

69. I therefore cannot pass comment on the details surrounding the process of applying for and obtain financial assistance. I am also not aware of whether there were no problems faced as a result of applying for financial assistance.

70. I have exhibited mum's Skipton Registration Form at **WITN4133002**.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

71. I count myself lucky that I was able to be there for mum throughout her life and to the point of her death. There are many people out there who had not had that opportunity so I am very grateful for this fact.

72. I wish the doctor who had diagnosed mum's HCV had sat the whole family down and told them how her infection could have affected the family both at the point of diagnosis and thereafter. It has affected the whole family upon her

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death, as we have had to say goodbye. It is hard to determine to what extent her infection had attributed to her death.

73. I believe that the Contaminated Blood Scandal is going to be a learning curve for us all, similar to that of the events which are taking place in 2020 and 2021 surrounding Coronavirus. In the future we could tell each other that we should have done this better and we could have done that better, which in principle applies similarly to the Contaminated Blood Scandal.

### Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

24.03.2021

### Table of Exhibits:

Date	Notes/ Description	Exhibit number
11 August 2004	Skipton Registration Form and Accompanying Documents of <b>M</b> <b>M</b>	WITN4133002
09 March 2020	Death Certificate of <b>M</b> <b>M</b>	WITN4133003

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