Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No.: WITN2098001
Exhibits: none
Dated: 21st May 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 23rd April 2020.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1949 and my address is known to the inquiry. I married my late husband, GRO-B in GRO-B and we were married for thirty eight years before he passed away in 2010. Prior to marrying GRO-B my maiden name was GRO-B We have two children together, GRO-B. I worked as GRO-B GRO-B GRO-B GRO-B retired in 2011. I intend to speak about my experience of becoming 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.

2. I would like to remain anonymous for this statement.

Section 2. How Infected

3. On the 24th December 1985 I was having an emergency operation to remove a portion of my bowel in relation to my Crohn's disease at Raigmore Hospital, Inverness. Dr Logie was in charge of my care during this operation. I received a blood transfusion as part of that operation and contracted hepatitis C as result. I do not know how many units of blood I received.

4. I was not given any information about the risk of infection from the transfusion beforehand. It was an emergency operation so all I was told was that I needed the blood immediately.

5. I received a letter from the Blood Transfusion Service sometime in 1995, I cannot remember exactly when, telling me that the donor of the blood I had received during my operation, had hepatitis C and that I was at risk of having contracted it myself. Following this, I was called by my doctor at the GRO-B GRO-B Dr GRO-B, asking me to come in for an appointment. I do not remember when this appointment was but at that appointment, Dr GRO-B explained what the letter had said in a bit more detail. He didn't give me very much information however. He explained that I was at risk of having contracted hepatitis C due to the blood donor for the transfusion I received being found to have hepatitis C. Following on from the letter I received, I attended an appointment at Raigmore Hospital to have a blood test to confirm whether I had contracted the infection. I cannot remember exactly when I went to the Blood Transfusion Service but it was shortly after my appointment with Dr GRO-B in 1995. I had a blood test and this confirmed that I had in fact contracted hepatitis C.

6. The only information I was given about the infection at both of these appointments was that I had to be very careful with all bodily fluids to prevent the infection from being passed on.

7. I would not say the information that I was given was adequate to help me understand or manage my infection. I had no idea how the infection was going to affect me or my family. All I knew is that the infection could be passed on and nothing else.

8. I believe I could have been told about my infection much earlier than I was. I had the infection for ten years before I was told. I couldn't understand why it had been left for so long.

9. I thought the way I was told about my infection was quite dismissive. All they told me was that I had infected blood and that was it. They didn't tell me anything else or try to explain it to me. They did not take any time with it.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I have not contracted any other infections other than hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

11. I do not believe I was ever treated or tested without my knowledge, consent or without full information about what they were doing.

12. As far as I am aware I was never treated or tested for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

13. My infection was very stressful and very worrying for me for many years. I was always concerned about passing the infection on to my children, I felt dirty even hugging them. After I was diagnosed, my father was ill and living with me at the time so I could look after him. I really worried I could infect him or make him worse somehow, it was very stressful. It was basically a

period of constant stress for me. That was draining to feel like that all the time.

14. Physically my infection wasn't too bad to deal with, I did not have a lot of physical symptoms. I just sort of learned to live with the infection.

15. Since contracting hepatitis C, I have developed kidney problems that started around 2000 but I do not know if those problems are in relation to my hepatitis. I was diagnosed with Chronic Kidney Disease in 2007 but I cannot remember how this was discovered. I suffer from frequent reoccurring infections and kidney stones which has resulted in operations to have these removed.

16. I also had an abscess on my liver that was discovered while I was a patient in Culduthel Hospital in Inverness around February 1986. The abscess was discovered by an x-ray and the consultant told me about it. No reason was given for me having it and I was given IV antibiotics to treat it, all while I was in Culduthel hospital. It was never explained whether this abscess was in relation to my hepatitis C.

17. I started interferon treatment for my hepatitis C sometime around October 2005. I started my treatment through Raigmore Hospital under the care of Dr Munro but was able to take my treatment at home. The treatment lasted for around six months. The treatment was successful and I think I was given the first all clear from my infection around October 2006. I had to wait two years to be given the final all clear and was given blood tests every few months after I completed treatment to check it wasn't coming back. After the two years had passed, I was tested and given the final all clear.

18. I did not face any obstacles in accessing treatments for my hepatitis C.

19. As far as I am aware there were no other treatments that could have been available to me.

20. The treatment was not nice at all, it was terrible. I had to more or less isolate myself for three days every week to recover from the treatment. I did not want anyone near me or anyone to talk to me, it was so physically and mentally draining. I had no energy at all, I was just so tired all the time. It made me feel like I didn't care about anything anymore. I lost a lot of my hair and most of my eyebrows during the treatment as well. Dr Munro asked if I wanted to stop about halfway through the treatment because of how it was affecting me but I persevered and got through it.

21. The only time my infection has impacted my treatment for anything was when I was refused treatment for a varicose vein due to my hepatitis C at a clinic in the GRO-B in GRO-B in July 2000. The doctor I had been referred to by my GP had not known about my infection and had refused to treat me because of my hepatitis C. This was recorded by the hospital as a missed appointment which is not correct because I was actually refused treatment. I cannot remember the name of the doctor I saw at this appointment. I then had a successful appointment to treat the issue in November 2000, again in GRO-B at the GRO-B GRO-B. Unfortunately I cannot remember the name of the doctor I saw at this second appointment.

22. Mentally, I still worry about infecting other people, even after having the treatment. The worry around infecting others has been something that has weighed on me for a long time. My infection made me not want to socialise with other people, again from fear of infecting them with it as well. I have a niece that always wants to hug me when I see her but even now I still wonder if I should do it. I still worry it is the right thing to do after all these years.

23. I know my infection affected my daughter GRO-B a lot. She was always very concerned about my health and I know she still worries about it now as well. She worried about having it herself at first because of my fears about cross infection but she's much better about it now. My oldest daughter GRO-B doesn't know a lot about my infection so I think she has been fine herself. My

late husband GRO-B had his concerns about my infection but he was the type to bury his head in the sand about things. He just tried to keep things going on as normal but he was very supportive throughout everything.

24. Socially I stopped enjoying going out and seeing people because of my infection. That all goes back to my fear of infecting other people. I was also just worried about what people would think of me if they knew I had hepatitis C I didn't know if they would want me in their company.

25. In terms of the stigma associated with hepatitis C, I know that certain members of the family tried to keep their children away from me because they thought I might infect them. That was quite hurtful and it was a hard thing to deal with. As the years went on, things did improve and they got a lot better with understanding my infection.

26. I stopped working as a GRO-B due to my infection a few times before my treatment. It was just not physically possible to the job whilst I felt the way I did. When I was receiving my treatment, I remember I went down to working part-time so that I had enough time to recover fully after my treatment. I had about three days a week were I felt I could work during my treatment and I went to work on those days. I felt that if I didn't work I would just stagnate, so I kept going.

27. Despite having to stop working at times or work part-time my infection didn't have too big an impact on me financially. My husband was still working during those periods so we still had income coming in. He was always good to me in that way.

Section 6. Treatment, Care and Support.

28. I have not faced any difficulties in receiving treatment, care or support because of my infection other than one incident with my varicose vein many years ago.

29. I have never been offered counselling or psychological support in relation to my infection. I remember Dr Munro at Raigmore Hospital always said to me that if I ever needed to talk to someone he would be there for me, which was nice of him. I think I definitely would have benefited from that sort of thing if it had been offered though. It would have helped to come to terms with it all, to realise that you were not the only one dealing with it. I felt very isolated dealing with it by myself.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

30. I received £20,000 from the Skipton Fund sometime in 2004. I also received a further £30,000 from the fund sometime in 2016. I found out about the Skipton Fund after my GP wrote to me and told me about the assistance available through the fund. I cannot remember exactly when this was. To apply to the fund I remember having to fill out and form and list who my consultant was, it was Dr Munro at the time, so they checked with him if I had hepatitis C. Once Dr Munro had confirmed that, the application went through pretty quickly. I don't remember there being any problems or difficulties with my application.

31. In January 2018 I received £1,000 from SIBSS for a heating allowance. I also receive £5,300 a year from SIBSS and I started receiving that annual payment in December 2018. I heard about SIBSS after the NHS wrote to me and told me about it. I think I received that letter sometime at the end of 2017 as far as I can remember. Applying to SIBSS was quite easy, it was just a very simple form. I did not face any difficulties applying to SIBSS.

Section 8. Other Issues

32. I have no other issues to bring to the Inquiry's attention.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 4|6|20.