

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN0826001

Exhibits: None

Dated:

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 30 September 2019.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B 1966 and my address is GRO-B Surrey GRO-B I live with my boyfriend GRO-B who I have been with for the past 22 years. We originally met when we worked together at the Post Office. It ought to be said at this point that I have only recently told GRO-B about my mother's condition. Given the recent publicity and the increased volume of communication with my father and sister in regard to this matter, my telling him became inevitable. I apologise to GRO-B for not having told him previously. I intend to speak about my mother's infection with HIV from contaminated blood. In particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment received and the impact it had on her, my family and our lives together.

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2. I currently work for the Metropolitan Police Service in [GRO-B] care and have been with the Met for the past [GRO-B] years. This is the longest period I have been with one employer due to the restructuring of this department and cutbacks in staff numbers, there is a lot of pressure at work given the increased work load placed upon staff.
3. I was born in [GRO-B] my father [GRO-B] worked at the British Leyland Car plant in [GRO-B] and I remember he worked on the old MGs. At one stage we moved up to Scotland, which is where my father was born, but he was unable to find work there so we moved back to [GRO-B] In 1981 we moved down to [GRO-B] in Surrey, I was then aged 15 years and at that stage my father worked for [GRO-B] and played the bagpipes in their pipe band.
4. My sister, [GRO-B] was born in 1971. My mother [GRO-B: M] was then aged 27 years. Mum and Dad had married in [GRO-B] We eventually settled in [GRO-B] Surrey as a family. Mum worked at [GRO-B] [GRO-B] Mum was a healthy individual we would go out cycling, she would tend to the horses and as a family we did things together.
5. I confirm that I am not currently legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry to assist with my witness statement.

Section 2. How Affected

6. Growing up I recall Dad was away a lot whilst playing in the pipe band. I remember [GRO-B] and I went away on holiday in 1985 when I was 19 years old. Whilst we were away Mum had gone into hospital for a hysterectomy and on our return we went to visit her. I remember it was the old Redhill General hospital, now called the East Surrey hospital. I can't recall how long Mum was in hospital for.
7. In 1989 I went to Canada for a period of 6 weeks and noticed how unwell Mum was. I remember she was in bed with shingles for a period, she

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had lumps on her head and legs. Given that Mum was never really ill, these changes were noticeable. She did a lot of overtime whilst working with the psychiatric patients at GRO-B. She would ride back and forth back to work on her moped. She eventually was made redundant from GRO-B but started agency work. However, the deterioration in her health was noticeable. She was getting weaker and more tired on a regular basis.

8. I remember Dad taking GRO-B and I into the lounge at home, saying, "I need to tell you something about Mum." So many things went through my mind at that point as I didn't know what he was going to reveal. Dad told us at that stage that Mum had HIV, but there was no indication as to how long she had to live. I remember on hearing the news I felt physically sick. I went upstairs, ran a bath and vomited. I do not recall talking to Mum about her condition. There was a great deal of uncertainty no one really knew what was going on and what the future held for Mum. Things are so much different now there is a greater degree of openness. People talk about these things now. At the time, such matters weren't really spoken of.
9. I believe Dad told us Mum had contracted the HIV infection in hospital but as a family the issue was not really spoken about. I remember reading the notes at the end of Mum's bed when she was in the hospice and there was a short passage stating that mum had had a hysterectomy and had contracted HIV. Dad had already told us this when he was telling us how serious mum was. It was evident then where she had acquired the infection but that was of course at a much later stage.
10. As a family we were given no advice as to how to manage Mum's condition. There was no information given to us as to what precautions we should take, such as blood to blood contact etc. I know Dad was tested for HIV but neither GRO-B or I were ever tested and were never offered a test.

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11. Mum was given a cocktail of tablets to take on a regular basis. There were up to 20 tablets to take at a time, 3 times a day, of various colours and shapes. As Dad was away working my sister and I helped to look after Mum at home. She was however, getting progressively weaker. She had become really thin and had lost her hair. Mum had bouts of thrush in the back of her throat and she looked very sunken faced and frail. Whilst she tried to continue working for the agency this became progressively more difficult as she had no strength.
12. Mum was given blood transfusions however, the beneficial effect of these transfusions would wear off and she would have to receive another. The frequency of these transfusions increased as the effect of each transfusion decreased. We were making weekly trips to hospital until it reached a point where Mum couldn't come home at all. Mum was transferred to the Charing Cross hospital, then to the Chelsea and Westminster hospital. Visiting Mum in hospital meant travelling to London from GRO-B each day. Dad had to keep taking time off work to be with Mum.
13. Eventually Mum received a course of cancer treatment, I remember this was administered via a cannula, which was inserted in her hand.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. I do not recall there being any mention of hepatitis C at any stage. I know that the hysterectomy operation was in the 1980s and it was in 1989 that I learnt of the HIV infection. It was following the removal of the cyst on the back of Mum's head that they were told by a Doctor at East Surrey hospital of the HIV infection.

Section 4. Consent

15. When Mum underwent her hysterectomy operation at Redhill General hospital, I am unaware whether she provided consent or whether information was given to her about the associated risks. I am not aware of my mother being tested for medical conditions without her knowledge or consent because this is not something I would have been privy to.

Section 5. Impact

16. The mental and physical effect of the HIV infection upon Mum was profound. That said she never really spoke to me about it. However, I was able to observe the changes in her. We used to do a lot of cycling and all sorts of other things, but as time went on she became really very tired. We still continued to do things but not as before. Mum never really became angry in my presence but remained positive.
17. Mum was in and out of hospital until March 1993. It was on Mother's Day that Dad called an ambulance and Mum was taken to [GRO-B]. I recall Dad phoned me to say she had between six and eight weeks to live. Mum died in the [GRO-B] that year.
18. [GRO-B] and I would visit Mum whilst she was in [GRO-B], which is in [GRO-B]. When I saw her in the hospice Mum was on drips and was not really very lucid. Whereas before going in she had been quite alert.
19. My mother's decline had a devastating effect upon my father. He would consume a bottle of whisky each night. He would really hit it hard each time we returned from hospital. Apart from the heavy drinking he moved from smoking cigarettes to smoking cigars.
20. My father [GRO-B] is now 81 years old and it is true to say he had never really got over the loss of my mother. In the same year my Mum died I had to go into hospital for an operation as I'd developed a blood clot in my liver. I was in St Mary's Hospital, Paddington and I recall Mum coming up to see me on one occasion. Following this operation I was off work for a

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period of 3 months. As a result either my sister or my boyfriend would drop me off and collect me from Mum's each day, so I was able to spend that time with her.

21. After Mum's death I would visit Dad regularly. I was not living too far from him and would pop in of the way to work. But after Mum's death, Dad really became a recluse. He continued working and the company he worked for were really good to him. However, he hated coming home to the family house. I think he retired from his job before he was sixty.
22. Equally losing Mum affected GRO-B She feels as though she has been 'robbed' as she knew Mum for less time than me. GRO-B was 48 when Mum died.
23. I feel we have been let down very badly by the medical profession. I feel you go into hospital to get well and in doing so you place all your trust in doctors and nurses. For my own past I feel very fortunate as in 1974, following a burst appendix, I had a number of blood transfusions. I was in hospital for 3 months. It is as a result of these transfusions that I have been told that I cannot donate blood. Apparently as I was given these transfusions in 1974, there is a risk of me transmitting vCJD.
24. The loss of Mum affected Dad greatly. He would choose not to go home each night and would drink himself into a stupor when he did get home. He would not talk to anyone for weeks or even months and just remain indoors.
25. Eventually Dad went off to New Zealand where he has a brother. He was there for about 6 months, then came back but was unable to settle. He went to Scotland but again returned, as he was unable to settle there. I think this inability to settle anywhere was because he was still grieving the loss of Mum. To this day Dad is still struggling with life without Mum. He too feels robbed and says life is now an existence.

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26. For my own part, I also feel I have been robbed. I am a granny now but cannot talk to my Mum about the pleasures of being a granny or having a stepdaughter. It's just not right. Initially I felt really bad but over time you come to terms with it, realising there is nothing you can do. I miss Mum in everything really, whilst we talk about her, especially when we go up to Scotland and visit places we'd been to with her. It would be good to know what she thought of the choices I'd made or failed to make in life.
27. I particularly hate Christmas as that for me was a special time spent as a family. In fact every birthday or celebration or any festive time is just torture. Mother's Day is yet more pain to bear. Twenty-six years on after losing Mum, the feelings are still there. You just have to learn to live with it as best you can.
28. Once Mum died my views on having children of my own changed to not wanting any. I didn't want them to have to go through the heartache I'd gone through. It felt as though my heart and soul had been ripped from my body. How could they let this all happen? I felt it is so unfair, you might just as well line people up against a wall and shoot them – it is pure murder.
29. The shock of when Dad first told me of Mum's condition still lives with me. It was both unbelievable and unbearable. I can still remember going with Mum to get the chemo treatment and the blood transfusions. Not once did I see Mum upset, moaning or angry. She was so brave right up to the end.
30. The loss of Mum did affect me in a big way. I recall others would comment on how different I'd become after my mother was gone.
31. The stigma attached to Mum's condition meant we kept it secret all those years. It is only now after 26 years that I have been able to tell one other person and my boyfriend as I needed to offload this burden. Everyone

thought at the time that HIV was something only dirty people got. Dad told me only recently he overheard a remark directed at him questioning his morals. Mum had a tape recording, which she must have got from someone working in the hospital. I can't now remember what it was about but it was an attack on people with HIV and how dirty they were.

32. Mum's HIV status remained a close family secret due to the stigma attached to HIV. Who would have believed a hospital worker with 2 kids, a husband and a dog would be in the same boat as those famous people and film stars with HIV and AIDS. The subject was never spoken outside our house.
33. After Mum died I felt I just couldn't be bothered with people. So many things just seemed nonsense. Promotion at work, people waffling on about things all seemed so worthless. I didn't have a lot of time for other people after my mother died. Unfortunately my previous boyfriend at the time was pretty unsupportive.
34. I feel like we were robbed and she was murdered by the Government or the NHS or whoever. We have nothing we are just empty. It's unfair, unjust and just not right.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

35. I don't remember being offered any counselling or psychological support. We were just left to get on with things. I tended to develop my own coping mechanisms. This is probably where I have developed such a love of animals and have so many pets. My love of horse riding provided a release for me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

36. I can't remember there being any financial help available when Mum died. My father doesn't remember either. I know we had the house

adapted for Mum and Dad got a car big enough to take Mum's wheelchair but I'm not sure whether those were insurance payments. No one advised us of the existence of any financial support.

Section 8. Other Issues

37. When my mother was in the hospice he and another patient's husband who was a lawyer, tried to obtain their wives' medical records but they were told that their records had been destroyed.
38. We knew nothing about this Inquiry until I saw something on Facebook about tainted blood. I mentioned it to my father and this is how it all got started. This is not about the money. It's to stop others having to go through what we went through. There must be thousands of people affected.
39. I want the Inquiry to obtain a massive apology from those responsible. Those who knew should be hung, drawn and quartered. I believe people within the health service knew what was going on at the time.
40. Had my father achieved any financial gain from this, his plan was to give my sister the money to help with medical treatment as she is losing her voice. However, GRO-B has now been diagnosed with motor neurone disease and we had to break this news to my father recently. I don't know how he will cope with this.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated 22nd Oct 2020