

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN1337001

Exhibits: WITN1337002

Dated: May 2020

## 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 and I was born on GRO-B I live at GRO-B

2. I make this statement as the affected wife of my late husband, GRO-B: H who was born on GRO-B and passed away aged GRO-B on GRO-B I always called my husband H

3. My husband was infected with HIV via contaminated blood products.

4. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my husband's full medical records.**

### Section 2. How Affected

5. My husband had severe Haemophilia A which required treatment with Factor VIII concentrates. I attach my husband's treatment record which illustrates the treatment he received between 1978 and 1989 at **Exhibit WITN1337002.**

6. My husband was treated at St James's University Hospital (*"the hospital"*) in Leeds under Dr L M Swinburne, who was director of the Haemophilia Unit. He was then treated by Dr McVerry.
7. To the best of my knowledge, my husband was not given any warning or advice regarding the risk of infection from Factor VIII concentrates.
8. My husband was infected with HIV via contaminated Factor VIII concentrates.
9. My husband's first positive test for HIV was on GRO-B and he was told that he was HIV positive in a telephone conversation in 1985. I was with my husband when he received the telephone call from the hospital. He was told that *"you have tested positive for HIV and that is a good thing"*.
10. However, the following day, my husband received another telephone call from the hospital and was told that *"a mistake had been made"* and that *"because HIV was a retrovirus it was a bad thing to test positive"*. I was also present for the duration of this telephone conversation. I believe that we arranged an appointment with Dr McVerry to discuss matters further.
11. A short while later, my husband and I went to see Dr McVerry and he explained matters both clearly and succinctly to us. In my view, the level of care which my husband received from Dr McVerry was always exemplary.

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

12. My husband was not told that he had been infected with, or put at risk of, any other viruses.

### **Section 4. Consent**

13. My husband was tested for HIV, on at least on one occasion that being GRO-B GRO-B but I do not know whether he was aware this was for HIV research only.

14. I do not know whether my husband was tested for any other viruses without his knowledge and therefore without his consent.

15. I do not know if my husband was treated with Factor VIII concentrates without his informed consent.

16. In terms of research, I can confirm that on GRO-B my husband was tested for antibodies for HIV. This was a confirmatory test for ENV and core antibodies. This specimen was tested for the detection of HIV and was intended for the purposes of research only. I do not know whether my husband was aware that he had been specifically tested for research purposes.

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

17. When my husband received the first telephone call from the hospital we both thought that there was nothing to worry about because we had been told that being HIV positive was a good thing. However, upon receipt of the second telephone call the following day, we were both completely floored and devastated; we immediately appreciated the severity of what my husband had been infected with.

18. We were in a state of shock and more so because we could not believe that we had been given the wrong information at first. We were also extremely disappointed that such awful and life changing news was conveyed to us in the form of a telephone call.

19. In terms of the physical difficulties caused or contributed to by his HIV, I confirm that he suffered with chronic herpes simplex, candida in his mouth and alimentary canal, poor sleep due to night sweats, abdominal pains, loss of appetite, weight loss and chest infections. By GRO-B my husband had developed full blown AIDS.

## ANONYMOUS

20. My husband also became depressed and introverted and cut himself off from his friends, which was hard for both of us. My husband told only me and his GP that he had been infected with HIV; he kept it secret from everyone else including GRO-B

21. My husband and I initially discussed his infection between ourselves. However, he would always say that there wasn't much to discuss as whatever would happen would happen as inevitability took its course. He was, of course, absolutely furious about what had happened but there was nothing he could do about it other than to deal resolutely with what transpired. Similarly, I could not really see the point in engaging in lengthy conversations about something which neither of us could change. I did not disclose his HIV to anyone else because it was not my story to tell and in that respect, it was none of my business.

22. Due to the massive stigma attached to HIV, my husband felt guilty that he had the virus, despite the fact that he had received it via treatment and not through any fault of his own. He began to withdraw from our son and daughter and, even towards the latter stages of his life, refused to discuss the virus with any relatives or friends. He lost interest in everything except the virus; he no longer had any interest in newspapers or the television and effectively underwent a complete role reversal in terms of his personality.

23. Prior to my husband's final hospital admission in GRO-B the virus had started to affect his brain which led to him being disorientated, weak and unable to walk unaided. I believe that he developed HIV- encephalopathy.

24. My husband passed away on GRO-B

25. Almost GRO-B years have passed since I lost H but it still feels like it was only yesterday.

26. I remember him being extremely upset and worried that our daughter, who was aged GRO-B when he passed away, would only remember him as a gaunt and frail man. However, he needn't have worried as she remembers him as a fantastic daddy. He used to do so much with her when she was growing up;



## ANONYMOUS

she was a real "daddy's girl". It was her who would pass him the hammers and various tools when he was maintaining his car.

27. Similarly when my husband [GRO-B] which involved a considerable amount of work [GRO-B] our daughter was the one by his side helping him. He used to say to me "*She won't remember things like this*", which was heart breaking to hear.

28. My husband passed away on a Friday and I told my daughter on the Saturday morning [GRO-B]

[GRO-B]

29. A number of years passed before I finally told my daughter the full story about her father's death and she initially, like I had, felt guilty because we both used to help him with his home treatment injections. However, as time passed this massive guilt has eased on both our parts.

30. My son was aged [GRO-B] when his father died and I told him on the Friday evening. His words to me were "*I know what you didn't tell me*". He had worked out that his father had passed away due to the HIV.

### Section 6. Treatment/care/support

31. In my view, my husband always received excellent treatment and care from Dr McVerry and his team at the hospital. We were always made to feel extremely welcome whenever we visited. They were always there for us and offered a fantastic level of unlimited support to us.

32. My husband had a very good relationship with Dr McVerry; they both held each other in high regard. My husband had been a very hard worker all his life, having been employed as a boiler attendant, and he was described by Dr McVerry as "*an unfit fit person*" and "*a very fit cripple*". I appreciate that in

## ANONYMOUS

today's world such terms would not be acceptable but during those times, the use of such terminology reflected the closeness of their relationship.

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

33. I received a financial settlement following the HIV Litigation which concluded in 1991. I do not recall whether I signed a waiver or not.

34. I also received a financial contribution from the Macfarlane Trust (MFT) to replace the windows in my house.

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

35. I want those persons who are responsible for this tragedy to be held to account.

### **Anonymity**

36. I want to apply for anonymity and I do not wish to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed.....

GRO-B

Dated..... 25 June 2020.....