

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN3679001

Exhibits: WITN3679002-003

Dated: September 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 I live at GRO-B
GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B
2. I make this statement in relation to my late mother GRO-B: M
who was born on GRO-B and died on GRO-B
She contracted Hepatitis C (HCV) following a blood transfusion.
3. This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late
mother's full medical records.

Section 2. How Affected

4. I do not have an exact date and I do not have my mother's medical records but in the late 1980s early 1990s she was taken into Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. She was visiting her sister at the time when she suffered severe abdominal pain and she was vomiting blood. I think she had some kind of scarring within her stomach which had ruptured following consumption of aspirin. She was given a blood transfusion.
5. I believe that it was towards the late 1990s that my mother told me that she had contracted Hepatitis C as a result of the blood transfusion from Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. I do not know whether she was told by the doctors at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary or whether the GP diagnosed her with the virus. I also do not know whether my mother underwent specific tests for Hepatitis C or whether her diagnosis was determined by chance.
6. My mother never said that she had been given any warnings in relation to risk of contracting Hepatitis C following a blood transfusion. I think her sister might have attended the hospital with her but I am not sure whether she was there during the transfusion.
7. My mother passed away on GRO-B The death certificate cites cause of death as probable Hepatocellular Carcinoma and Chronic Hepatitis C Infection. A copy of her death certificate is attached at Exhibit WITN3679002.
8. I attach at Exhibit WITN3679003 a copy of a letter from Ewan Forrest Consultant Physician and Hepatologist dated 12 August 2013 to Dr J M Candy within which Mr Forrest refers to the contraction of Hepatitis C through a blood transfusion many years ago.

Section 3. Other Infections

9. To the best of my knowledge my mother was infected with Hepatitis C and no other infections.

Section 4. Consent

10. I am not sure whether my mother knew that she was undergoing blood tests specifically for Hepatitis C. I think she would have consented to a test for Hepatitis C and I do not see a reason why she would not have provided her consent.
11. I do not know whether any tests were carried out on my mother for the purpose of research.

Section 5. Impact

12. Mum first became symptomatic with HCV in the late 1990s when she began suffering from various health problems; arthritis, bouts of sickness, lack of appetite, confusion and lethargy. She was always tired and lacked energy. She suffered from all these symptoms until her death in 2013.
13. She also suffered from brain fog and became forgetful. I took her to a memory clinic but she was not diagnosed with dementia. She was able to go to the shop on her own but she would easily become forgetful and tired.
14. My father died in 2000. He had been ill but had nursed and supported Mum with her illness. My mother subsequently lived alone but due to the HCV symptoms she required more support following his death. My brother would stay with her intermittently as she could not really cope on her own. I helped her with shopping and housework. I managed her financial affairs. She relied heavily on family for over 11 years with every day tasks.
15. She did not discuss with me how she felt about her diagnosis. I knew she was upset about it because she was a clean lady who did not drink alcohol and did not smoke. The diagnosis was certainly a shock to her which she kept to herself and closest family in fear of the stigma attached. I believe that she felt HCV was linked with drug abuse and I know that within she was very upset.

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16. I do not think that my mother underwent any treatment for Hepatitis C. I do not know whether any was offered to her.
17. Mum did not work. She had not really worked since she had suffered an aneurysm in the mid 1980s.
18. When my brother died she was already physically very ill. She had found him at home and she never got over it. Her health deteriorated. During this time my mother's GP told me that she had been diagnosed with liver cancer. He told me that there was probably no treatment available for her because of the size of the tumour and I asked him not to tell my mum.
19. In or around May/June 2013, I took her down to Glasgow Royal Infirmary for a further appointment and we spoke to the consultant who told her about the liver cancer. By that time she could not walk and was very tired and weak.
20. She lived for approximately 5 to 6 months after the diagnosis and the only care offered was palliative due to the size of the tumour and her general health at the time. I believe they left her to her own devices following this diagnosis.
21. Mum's quality of life had suffered from the late 1990s until her death in GRO-B. My mother passed away in the GRO-B in Glasgow.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

22. There was no care offered to my mother following diagnosis with liver cancer. We organised carers ourselves and we had no obstacles in this particular matter.
23. As far as I am aware my mother had not received psychological support or counselling following her diagnosis with Hepatitis C.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

24. My Mum saw a small article in a newspaper in the late 1990s about infected blood following which she applied to the Skipton Fund and received Stage One payment of £20,000.
25. Following her diagnosis of terminal liver cancer in 2013, by chance Dr Forrest mentioned about a fund set up for people with this diagnosis and advised my Mum to apply. She received the Stage 2 payment from the Skipton Fund in the sum of £50,000. At that point, I had children of my own and was working a job share as a nursery nurse. I was going back and forward to care for Mum. I could only work part time as time was taken up looking after Mum and the children. I received no carer's allowance.
26. After diagnosis of her terminal cancer Mum was given £1,100 per month for the last 7 months of her life.
27. Between the late 1990s and 2013 she received no other financial help.
28. We found there were no obstacles in the application process. We had to provide confirmation of my mother's diagnosis which we were able to do.
29. My mother also received Disability Living Allowance and her old age pension.
30. I received no financial assistance for funeral arrangements.

Section 8. Other Issues

31. We were never contacted by the Archer Inquiry despite the fact that my mother contracted the Hepatitis C virus following a blood transfusion.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

32. I would like to apply to retain my anonymity. I understand that my witness statement will be read and published by the Inquiry.

33. I would be prepared to give oral evidence to the Inquiry if I was called to do so.

34. I was extremely disappointed and hurt to learn that I have been refused Core Participant Status from the Infected Blood Inquiry. The application submitted by Collins Solicitors on my behalf is robust and does indeed meet the criteria required. The Chair of the Inquiry has already accepted that refusing this status will cause difficulties with disclosing information to victims, whilst also stating that the Inquiry must act in fairness and avoid any unnecessary costs. My mother paid the ultimate price of living with Hepatitis C when she died prematurely as a result of receiving contaminated blood. She never had the opportunity to take part in any discussions about her infection or how it affected our lives. As a result of the injustice and suffering experienced by my late mother, I ask the Inquiry to carefully and compassionately reconsider the decision to grant me the Core Participant Status in order to allow me to have that opportunity on her behalf.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.

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Dated. 12/9/19