

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN2977001

Exhibits: WITN2977002

Dated: April 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 and I currently live at GRO-B
GRO-B
GRO-B My UK address is GRO-B. I was
born on GRO-B 1975. I am currently employed on a three year contract
as an GRO-B at an GRO-B
2. My parents, Mr GRO-B and Mrs GRO-B live in the UK and
have provided Witness Statements of their own which I refer to as
GRO-B
3. I make this statement in relation to my late sister, GRO-B: S who was
born on GRO-B 1979 and passed away on GRO-B 1980 at
GRO-B aged 17 months. I was four years old when my
sister died.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access
to my late sister's medical records. If and in so far as I have been

provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Affected

5. I remember when [S] was born I loved having little sister; it was great fun to have someone to play with.
6. When [S] was about 9 months old, she developed Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma which began as a red mark on her ear. I did not know it at the time, but I have since learned that she had to have treatment and radiotherapy in order to treat this cancer. I can remember being told that [S] was poorly and that she had cancer, but at the age of 4 I did not really understand what that meant or how serious her condition was.
7. As I was a young child at the time, details on how my sister came to be infected are more fully set out in my parent's Witness Statements,
[GRO-B]
8. I remember money being tight at times. I believe that [S] treatment was the main cause of this. My parents are of a generation that would be too proud to admit that.
9. I remember [S] being taken to hospital appointments and sometimes I would go with my parents and [S] to hospital in [GRO-B]. Even at that young age, I knew that [S] treatment was serious as we had to travel so far to the [GRO-B], rather than going our local hospital in [GRO-B]. At the hospital, I can remember seeing my sister, who was a tiny baby, with tubes sticking out of her.
10. At home, I used to sleep outside [S] bedroom on the floor in the corridor; my sister and I had separate bedrooms and I wanted to be near her, but didn't want to disturb her. I was trying to protect her and be a big sister because I knew she was poorly.

11. Looking back, I remember regularly being left with my grandparents or neighbours whilst my parents were away with [S] as an adult, I now realise that I was being sheltered from all of the worst parts of [S] illness.

12. My sister died on [GRO-B] 1980 after a sudden, short illness which caused her liver to fail; I am now aware that her death certificate records hepato renal failure, viral hepatitis and lymphoma as the causes of her death. At the time I was not aware of my sister getting more ill or being taken to hospital shortly before her death; I believe my parents shielded me from this and made sure I was kept away.

13. Growing up, I had always been told that it was the cancer that had caused [S] death, and that there had been a complication whereby she had contracted hepatitis. It was never explained to me how [S] had contracted hepatitis at such a young age, and I did not understand what this disease was until I was much older and getting my travel jabs.

14. I did not learn until 2018 that, as part of her cancer treatment in 1979 and/or 1980, [S] had been given Factor VIII and that it is likely that this product contained the hepatitis and/or any other infections which led to her death.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. I do not know precisely what infections my sister had as a result of the blood products she received.

16. As I was a young child at the time, details on other infections that my sister had are better described in my parent's Witness Statements, [GRO-B]
[GRO-B]

17. Although [S] death certificate says that she died from hepatitis, I believe that she was also infected with other viruses, including HIV, by the blood products she received.

Section 4. Consent

18. I do not know whether or not my sister was treated or subject to testing without my parents' consent.

Section 5. Impact

19. I cannot remember much about the aftermath of [S] death. I can remember that my parents told me that [S] was going to be "with the angels" but again, at that age, I did not really understand the significance of this. I just remember the little things. I remember that [S] was cremated and I would often wonder why she was cremated because my mum's family were all buried with a gravestone. I do not know if her ashes were scattered. I did not go to the funeral, as my parents did not think it was appropriate for me to go at such a young age. However, I did go and see [S] at the undertakers. At the undertakers, I remember seeing that [S] had a bruise on her face. At that point I did not realise what it all meant and I did not really process it all until I was a bit older. I believe her death affected me more the older I got because I began to better contextualise what had happened.

20. Much as they did during [S] treatment, my parents carefully shielded me from how upset they must have been following the death of my sister. I cannot imagine what they must have been going through.

21. As a child, I never really understood why my sister was not there or why she had died and I was very aware of her absence whilst growing up. I noticed that other children at my school would have a sibling to look out for them "in the corridors" and I began to notice that I didn't have that. I think it was this that made me begin to think about my sister more and more as I got older. I would periodically get upset about the fact that my sister wasn't there any more. There was one particular incident which I can clearly remember when, at the age of 13, I had to be collected from school. I cannot completely recall

why I became so upset at that point but remember breaking down completely out of the blue. I knew it was about [S] but I do not know precisely what triggered my emotions at that point. My teachers were very concerned about me and I was kept at home for a number of days.

22. Because I was so young when my sister died I did not initially think about the anniversaries of [S] death and her birthday, but as I got older they would become more and more relevant. I also began to notice my mum being upset around mother's day and Christmas. She is a very caring person who is easily moved so it was easier to see her grief. My father on the other hand just threw himself into his work, which I now believe he used as a distraction or coping mechanism. As I got older, he also threw himself into supporting my hobby of swimming; as a result of all the hard work I put in, and my father's support I, managed to take part in [GRO-B] with butterfly being my preferred stroke.

23. I always felt much loved by my parents growing up but never felt smothered. I do believe that my parents were very keen for me to go to university; in a way I think that as the surviving child I felt an internalised pressure to achieve and make my parents proud of me.

24. We spoke about [S] as a family more regularly as I grew older. As a family we tried to commemorate her life by talking about her more openly. However, my parents never discussed their suspicions that [S] had been infected with hepatitis and HIV as a result of receiving a contaminated blood product. Again I think this was because they were shielding me, this time from the stigma surrounding the disease which was truly awful in the 1980s and 1990s when it wasn't properly understood.

25. Throughout my life, I have struggled with attachment issues and avoided getting too close to people in case I get hurt. I believe that seeing what my parents went through in losing their child has put me off having children of my own.

26. In 2018 my mother, aged 73 at the time, came to visit me in Shanghai, where I am currently living, for the Tomb Sweeping national holiday, a festival in China whereby families sweep and clean their ancestor's tombs. At the beginning of this visit, she handed me a heart-breaking letter with the news that the Infected Blood Inquiry had been announced and telling me, for the first time, that my sister had been a victim the contaminated blood scandal. I produce this letter as Exhibit WITN2977002

27. It must have been awful for my mother to carry that letter with her all the way to China. She must have shouldered a heavy burden in making her decision as to when would be a good time during that special holiday to give me the letter.

28. Hearing about the cause of S death initially spoilt our holiday and a memory making adventure for my mother. The news came as such a shock to me. I went back to work during my mother's visit but became so upset that I had to be sent home to have two days off; I was in no state GRO-B as I was beside myself with grief. I had to explain to my mother why I was not at work, though I tried to hide being upset from her.

29. Learning the truth about my sister's death has opened up an issue which I suppose I never really came to terms with, and has been very distressing for me. I understand my parents' reasons for not telling me about their suspicions about the true cause of my sister's death. Nonetheless, it has been very difficult to come to terms with the truth and I am still in emotional turmoil thinking about it.

30. One of the main reasons why I am so upset is because of how avoidable this whole scandal has been. I am also very worried about how my parents will be affected, at the age they are, by having all of these memories brought back to the forefront of their minds. I feel they deserve a happy retirement and I am worried they are not going to get that.

31. Finding out about the reason for S death whilst I was living in China was difficult for me. When I first arrived in China, I had to undergo a medical

assessment for my job and as part of that I had an AIDS test. I have felt nervous discussing what happened to [S] at work in case my work permit gets revoked. I vividly recall the shock tactic adverts of the 1980s and feel angry that someone so young and innocent might have been a victim of this horrible disease.

32. I have struggled with low moods ever since finding out last year. I shift from sadness and feeling tearful, to "survivor guilt" and anger. I have found myself veering from feeling quite sad to feeling quite happy. I have also developed an immense feeling of responsibility to take care of my parents now that I know what they have been dealing with. The fact that my parents are now elderly and in failing health has also, once again, brought home the fact that I don't have a sibling to share this responsibility with.

33. After learning the truth about [S] death I have been to see a GP who wanted to prescribe me anti-depressants.

34. Learning about the cause of [S] death has had a significant impact on my work and ability to perform on my job. I have spent several hours in uncontrollable tears [GRO-B] office and he was so concerned about me that we had weekly appointments so he could check I was coping. I have struggled to concentrate at work and have missed out on a promotion to a role for which, on paper, I was by far the best and most qualified candidate.

35. I have not really been able to tell many people about the background to my sister's case because of the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS. I have only really told my immediate line manager and [GRO-B] Although my [GRO-B] has been very supportive, my current immediate line manager has been appalling in terms of support and understanding.

36. As a result of my concerns for my parents, I took the decision to break my contract early so that I can be nearer them. I have tried unsuccessfully to find a suitable role in the UK but have managed to secure work in Dubai which is a much shorter flight back home should I need to get to my parents at short notice. My employer has fortunately released me from my contractual

liabilities for breaking my contract; under Chinese law they could have sought damages from me. In relocating, I will incur costs of about £2,000 and I will take a significant pay cut.

37. In preparation for making this statement, I have had to take two additional days off work as I became too upset. GRO-B In China I only get five sick days a year, and I have already used them all up. If I am to take any more days, I will lose £100 a day.

38. As GRO-B one of the poems GRO-B
GRO-B is *Mid-Term Break* by Seamus Heaney is the poem I have been GRO-B
GRO-B it is about the death of the poet's brother at a very young age, about his own grieving and that of his father and mother. The poem has vivid descriptions of the poet seeing his dead brother "in the four foot box as in his cot" and painfully echoes my own experience. It has therefore been difficult to have to read it regularly. GRO-B

39. My parents must have been devastated when they found out that the Government killed their daughter by giving her contaminated blood. Late justice and the revelation of the truth is better than no justice, but I am angry that my parents, now in their seventies, have had to wait so long – they are too old to have to face this. The thought of old wounds being reopened and having to articulate a painful process of re-grieving is hard to take. This whole process has really 'aged' my parents. I consider myself to be lucky in the sense that I am able to use work as a bit of a distraction.

40. It has been difficult for us all trying to second guess how this case has made us feel and navigating what is best for us individually and collectively as a family. It has profoundly redefined and reconfigured our relationship, made all the more difficult having to be conducted via Skype.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

41. No counselling has ever been made available to me or my parents in consequence of what happened. I definitely feel that counselling would help me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

42. Details on any financial assistance that my parents received are better described in my parent's Witness Statements, GRO-B

GRO-B

Section 8. Other Issues

43. I want the Inquiry to appreciate that the impact of this scandal is not historic but is ongoing to this day. It has affected almost every aspect of my life and damaged my ability to form relationships and have children of my own.

44. I want the Inquiry to bring justice; I want those who are to blame for what happened to take responsibility. Although it is not all about compensating the victims and those affected, I do believe there should be some form of financial support for people like my parents; when S fell ill, my parents struggled financially because of the financial burden that S treatment had been.

45. I do believe that what was done to my sister and the other victims of this scandal was criminal. Unfortunately I have been limited in my ability to research the subject because of the restrictions on internet access.

Anonymity

46. I GRO-B want to remain anonymous and I understand that my statement will be published on the Public Inquiry Website.

47. I would be willing 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

GRO-B

Dated 1st May, 2019