Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No: WITN6362001
Exhibits: Nil
Dated: 15. DECEMBER 2021

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 1 October 2021.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B and my date of birth is GRO-B 1952. I live in GRO-B but I am from GRO-B through and through. I was born in Guy's Hospital London.

2. I am widowed and I have two grown up children. Both of my children are married, and I have four grandchildren.

3. I was a printing Machine engineer from the age of 18, then I became an electro mechanical computer engineer. I ended up working at the GRO-B GRO-B running the Clearing Centre and Computer suites. I have been retired since 2015.

4. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C through a blood transfusion. In particular, I intend to speak about the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

5. I am not legally represented and I am happy for the Inquiry team investigators to assist me with my statement.

Section 2. How Infected

6. On 21 December 1973, I was travelling home from work and was involved in a road traffic accident.

7. It was back when I was a printing engineer. I had to go to the office in GRO-B On my way back, I was driving just off the GRO-B I came over the railway bridge and someone came out a side-road, hitting the side of my car. They didn't stop so it was classed as a hit-and-run. We never found out who it was that caused this.

8. My right foot was traumatically amputated in the car. I lost an awful lot of blood. I know because someone ran out of a local shop and put a tourniquet on my leg. They really saved my life. I never found out who it was.

9. I was taken away in an ambulance and admitted to Guy's Hospital. From then on, I had several operations. I was given a lot of blood in hospital. I'm not sure how much. I received at least four pints when I first got there. Then I'm sure there was more through other operations. I'm not sure what else I was given, possibly Factor 8. I was under the care of Dr Foster.

10. This is when I believe I was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV). There was no warning about the blood, it was all done with the best intentions. If they hadn't given me blood, I might not have survived.

11. I was in hospital until the end of February as my other foot was badly broken and I couldn't use crutches to move.

12. I was eventually discharged because the Harrods Bombing occurred. They wanted everyone out of hospital because they thought the IRA was undertaking a bombing campaign on the mainland. They said if I could walk down the corridor, they'd send me home. My toe was off the floor sticking out but they still threw me out of hospital.

13. In 1983, we went down to Bristol to visit some friends. My wife had a friend who was a consultant haematologist. He told me I didn't look well and took me down to Southmead Hospital to check my blood. They couldn't find anything. I think it was a general blood test, not testing for anything specific.

14. I found out that I had been infected with HCV after I gave blood in around 1989. I was working at the GRO-B and the blood donation service came in. It was a day when things weren't going well, I think a machine wasn't working. Two older ladies said they were going to give blood. So, I joined them. Giving blood was something I had done ever since the accident, in order to give back. I regret that now as I have possibly passed the virus on to 20 or so people. It plays on my mind a lot.

15. After I gave blood that particular time, a couple of weeks passed and I received a letter in the post telling me to see my GP. That's when I found out I had HCV.

Section 3. Other Infections

16. If I've had any other infections, I've got no knowledge of it. If it's still embedded in my notes at Guy's Hospital, I wouldn't know.

Section 4. Consent

17. I was not in a position to consent to the blood transfusion. As I mentioned, it was in my best interest for the doctors to give it to me.

Section 5. Impact

18. When I found out I had HCV, I was referred to my GP who had no knowledge about it. I was the only patient he knew of having HCV.

19. I had BUPA health insurance through my company, and I was referred to Dr Lancaster Smith. That was at GRO-B I think, it was a private hospital. They were very good there.

20. There was no name for the infection at the time, Dr Smith just called it non-specific Hepatitis. I was told by him that it would not cause any serious problems, and it was nothing to worry about. He said there wasn't any cure, and they would just monitor me.

21. They did not acknowledge that I had acquired the HCV from infected blood. They questioned me about drugs. I've never taken drugs. I don't even smoke. I like a beer but I don't drink any spirits. They asked me about sexual activity. My wife wasn't happy about that sort of thing.

22. Not long after, BUPA washed their hands of me. Since it was diagnosed as chronic, they said it was not in their remit to treat.

23. I was then transferred to St Mary's Sidcup, under the care of Dr Curtis,

24. I don't think I was given adequate information to understand and manage HCV. The only information that was available at that time was scare stories in the press. There were also reports about it being sexually transmitted. That was difficult with my family. Around that time I experienced a lot of mood swings. I became a bit depressed.

25. I used to go up to St Mary's Sidcup every six months. Dr Curtis was monitoring my liver function tests. I didn't get on with him, he just didn't seem interested. There wasn't a specialist nurse, or any other support at that time.

26. I had a liver biopsy which was the most painful thing in my life. They stuck a great big needle into my liver. I had to stay in bed all day. At some point I also had to have a camera down my throat looking for any lesions in my oesophagus. That too was awful.

27. My wife understood the HCV more than me, since she was a nurse. She trained in general nursing, and then psychiatric nursing. She moved to be a Phlebotomist, later. The fact I was diagnosed with HCV could have been a problem for her work, due to the risk of blood to blood contamination. She'd get needle-stick injuries at work too, so already had that risk.

28. The children didn't know my HCV status, they were too young. They did eventually find out, in later years. We just kept it all quiet. My wife was very reluctant for anyone to know, including family members. This was due to all the stigma that was attached to the virus.

29. Nobody was aware until later on. I don't think other people would have understood much anyway. Because I had it, I read about it a lot. But most people didn't understand, especially in those days. The information was very poor.

30. In the mid-90s, I was transferred to King's College Hospital. Dr Curtis asked me if I wanted to move, and I agreed. They were more

informative and had consultants that were treating the virus. That's when the risks seemed to become even more real.

31. I was told to keep any personal products separate from my family, like toothbrushes and hairbrushes. I was also told to be careful with any blood spills.

32. I had to treat my blood as though it was poison and keep it away from the rest of the family. It was very traumatic and played on my mind all of the time.

33. My wife didn't argue about it, but it's surprising we did stay together. We were a strong couple.

34. It was difficult worrying about infecting the rest of my family. To be honest, I felt very low as I had this contagious disease. Intimacy between my wife and I seemed to become an intolerable risk. This put a strain on our relationship at times. My wife was tested about five times over the years. Fortunately, she tested clear of HCV.

35. If I contracted a cold or virus, my body reacted badly, or that's how I felt. I am still badly affected by any cold or flu.

36. In around 2006 or 2007, when I was under the care of Dr Agarwal, he suggested a year-long-course of Ribavirin and Interferon to treat the HCV. That consisted of one weekly Interferon injection in my stomach, and daily Ribavirin tablets. I did this for 48 weeks, in around 2007.

37. My wife was medically qualified so she administered the injections. The side-effects were absolutely horrendous. I'd have the injection on a Friday, and by Saturday I couldn't do anything. I could just about go to work on the Monday.

38. Then the injection was moved forward by one day so that we could go out for a meal on Friday. Some Mondays I went in, and some I didn't.

And then, as I was coming to the end of the week, I would feel a sort of withdrawal... I would feel ill yet again.

39. I just went to bed, and stayed in bed. Occasionally, it was extreme flu-like symptoms. My whole immune system was down. By the end, I was bed-ridden for three or four days of the week. This impacted my job performance, as you can expect.

40. I had counselling during my first course of treatment. This was a tough time. I would meet someone when I got my drugs and have a chat about how I was feeling. The counselling was ok, but at the time I didn't feel as though I gained anything substantial.

41. The impact was bad at times. My children suffered because of my mood swings. I could be extremely irritable and short-tempered.

42. My marriage also suffered, both physically and mentally. My wife took up walking on Sundays, which is when I was at my lowest. She needed to get away from the strain, and also because of the stigma in the early days. I also lost valuable social times being ill, due to both the virus and the treatment. We didn't go on holiday or anything like that.

43. At the end of the course, in August 2008, Dr Agarwal wanted me to carry on for a further 26 weeks, just as an experiment, I suppose. We had a very heated discussion about this. I just wanted my life back, it was killing me. The treatment was holding the virus at bay, but was not improving it. I declined and the treatment was terminated.

44. Not long after, in November 2008, I was made redundant from my job of 23 years. I knew that I wasn't performing. Although I cannot prove it, I am convinced that the HCV treatment was part of the reason, if not all of it.

45. I was trying to run a team of engineers at the GRO-B as well as at the GRO-B. They were all PC orientated. The GRO-B GRO-B joined with another company so I lost that site, and the GRO-B GRO-B were reducing numbers so I was made redundant.

46. Financially, it was very traumatic. I had quite a large mortgage. I had some savings and redundancy package, and I had to put it all together. There were three endowments on the mortgage. We had taken a loan to work on the kitchen, and when my daughter went to university. So when I lost my job, I had to cash everything in and borrow money from our parents.

47. My wife's sister is married to a chap who's been like a mentor to me. He said I should get rid of my mortgage. I sat down with a book and worked it all out. In the end I got all the cash together and got rid of it.

48. I managed to find myself another job, fitting kitchens with my nephews. That topped up my money sufficiently to get by on.

49. Then, in around 2012, I managed to get a job back with the GRO-B GRO-B It was an administrative role. I had been out of work for 4 years.

50. I was at work when my wife got diagnosed with terminal cancer in 2013. She died in 2015. She had previously had breast cancer in 2000, and she had a mastectomy and chemotherapy. Again, because of private health insurance, she was monitored every year. The cancer got into her bone and liver. Eventually she got a brain tumour which is why she passed away.

51. I was offered treatment again in around February 2016. I was not offered anything else in the intervening period. I was treated with a cocktail of drugs over a 12-week period. It was a combination of

Ribavirin, Exviera and Viekirax tablets. This seems to have eradicated the virus.

52. Apparently, my viral count was up in the millions but after four weeks of this treatment, it was down to zero. That was brilliant. The treatment wasn't debilitating, I just took the tablets as prescribed and I didn't have any headaches or anything. I saw my consultant last week and said, "If you see Dr Agarwal, who now runs the department. please say thanks from me."

53. I now have cirrhosis of the liver due to the HCV. It is in the zone for requiring a transplant.

54. I have cleared the HCV. But people are picking up shingles again, so I do get worried that it could come back. If I get COVID-19, I wonder whether the HCV would return..

55. King's College Hospital have been good in later years. I go for check-ups every six months. These are always a worry as my liver is in such a bad state. Should I need a transplant, my life may well be over. I had an ultrasound in April and whilst it is stable I feel alright.

56. I am impacted with fatigue and how I react to illness. Even now, if I get a cold, I go down like a sack of potatoes. Recently I had a cold, and it's taken me four weeks to get rid of it. I don't think that's normal. I still have the effects of the cold. I can't tell if its related to the HCV. I also do get very tired. My hands will seize up but I don't get moody anymore, nor depressed.

57. In terms of dental care etc., I always inform anyone of my situation. In the early days, there was a real stigma attached to HCV, but I have not been refused treatment.

58. I haven't had any issues with insurance, I didn't have to declare anything. I haven't got any life insurance. I get travel insurance through the bank and I've never been asked about HCV.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

59. I had no difficulties in accessing treatment, not that I know of. There was a gap in treatment between 2008 and 2016 but there may have been a reason for that.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

60. In 2004, I was put in touch with the Skipton Fund. I think the information came from the hospital, but I'm not sure. They helped me apply by filling out a form. After a long application process, it was concluded that I contracted HCV from my time at Guys Hospital in 1973. I was given a payment of £20,000. It did help, I used it to help pay off the mortgage.

61. In 2014, I was informed that my liver readings were 13.5 Kpa. But the next payment would be due if my readings met 14.5 Kpa. I thought this was disgraceful. This situation was not my fault, but I was told those were the rules.

62. In 2015, the next time I saw my consultant, the readings had shot up to 21.5 Kpa. This was at a routine appointment. This meant that the next payment came in, and I was given £50,000 as well as a pension. I got a monthly payment of about £1000. It recently went up to £2300.

Section 8. Other Issues

63. I am now 68 years old. I contracted this virus in 1973, 47 years ago. My family and I have had to endure this situation... the lows and the very lows. My liver is now in a very bad state because of it. My health

suffers. My wife, who nursed me through the very bad times, is unfortunately not here due to breast cancer. She never saw any end, only the bad times we had.

64. Although I am grateful for the money, it is too little too late. Money could have really helped us out when the kids were younger. I don't need it now. I'll probably end up giving it to the kids.

65. Successive governments, their departments, and ministers have done everything to hide the truth and deny fault. They have left a legacy which has killed people, and still is killing people. They should hang their heads in shame.

66. I suppose I have been lucky to still be here. My liver is shot to pieces and the virus has controlled my life for a lot of my lifetime. I still feel very bitter about my situation. I know that at the time, Guy's Hospital did their best for me, but I cannot understand why buying blood from suspect groups did not ring alarm bells. This was total incompetence in all areas; from our government, the NHS, and the Blood Transfusion Service. I feel very bitter still and my true feelings cannot be put into words.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 15/12/21