

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN1662001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

---

FIRST WRITTEN WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-B

GRO-B

---

I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth is the GRO-B  
GRO-B and I live at GRO-B  
I married my husband, GRO-B GRO-B and we have a son, GRO-B  
GRO-B. I am a retired GRO-B.
2. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

### Section 2. How infected

3. I suffer from Von Willebrand disease, which I was diagnosed with when I was around 16 or 17 years old. GRO-B I suffered from severe nose bleeds. This was also around the time when I had already started my menstruation, which was horrendous for me. I recall my father having to carry me from my bed to my bathroom because I was so weak.

## ANONYMOUS

4. We went to the [GRO-B] [GRO-B] to have our nose bleeds investigated. This is when I was diagnosed with Von Willebrand disease.
5. There were three occasions [GRO-B] when I was treated with blood products.
6. In [GRO-B] I had a bad fall down steps which resulted in hematoma (severe bruising) to my buttock. [GRO-B] [GRO-B] My injury was treated with Factor VIII.
7. [GRO-B] I had another bad fall [GRO-B] I was on my way to a client's house. It was very icy and I slipped and fell. This caused severe bruising more so than on the previous occasion.
8. I attended [GRO-B] and once again I was treated with Factor VIII.
9. On the third occasion [GRO-B] I fell off a horse and fractured my vertebrae. The fall had also caused me a lot of bruising. I went to see [GRO-B] again. However, I do not recall whether I was treated with Factor VIII on this occasion, but I believe that I might have been.
10. Prior to the treatment I received with Factor VIII I was not informed of any potential risks associated with being treated with contaminated blood products.
11. As a result of being treated with contaminated blood products, I have contracted Hepatitis C (HCV).
12. I was not told that I had the infection until [GRO-B] after my son, [GRO-B] was born. I went to the hospital appointment with him and my sister, following a blood check-up.

# ANONYMOUS

13. I recall that my sister took care of GRO-B whilst I went to receive the results of the blood test. I was seen by GRO-B  
GRO-B

14. GRO-B told me that she had bad news for me, and that I had been infected with HCV as a result of receiving contaminated blood products. She also said that she was not meant to tell patients about it, but that she believed that they had the right to know.

15. She told me of the infection in a matter of fact manner which I considered appropriate. Whilst she was direct she was very good and very nice, I had a lot of respect for her.

16. She also tested GRO-B and my sister for the virus but thankfully, they were both clear.

17. I was not given any information about HCV or how to manage it during the initial meeting. Further, I was not given any information at any further appointments.

18. I do believe that I should have been provided with information about my infection, and it should have been at the initial meeting.

19. I was never informed about the risks of others being infected as a result of the infection, I looked it up myself.

20. My brother has also been infected with HCV as a result of receiving contaminated blood, and our father had Von Willebrand's disease, so we often attended hospital appointments together. At those appointments my brother and I had blood samples taken and we had our abdomens checked. It was never explained to us why.

**Section 3. Other Infections**

21. I am not aware that I have received any other infections as a result of being treated with infected blood products.

**Section 4. Consent**

22. I do not believe that I was tested for anything without my consent or knowledge.

23. When I had the blood test after having my son, I was informed that I was being tested for HCV.

**Section 5. Impact**

24. In terms of the physical effects of HCV, I suffered from joint pains and severe nose bleeds.

25. I also had to have my gallbladder removed.

26. In terms of the mental effect of HCV, I was very stressed and anxious about what the infection meant for me and my future.

27. I was also worried about other people finding out about it, so I tried to push it to the back of my mind. It did not help that I did not actually have a lot of information about the virus from the hospital.

28. Around **GRO-B** I commenced Interferon and Ribavirin treatment for my HCV. This consisted of weekly injections and daily tablets for 48 weeks. Fortunately the treatment was successful; however I suffered from terrible side-effects.

29. I had very bad diarrhoea and sickness. I also experienced severe fatigue and breathlessness.



## ANONYMOUS

30. The treatment also affected my appearance. Before the treatment my hair was thick and curly, but during and after the treatment it became straight. It also caused me significant weight loss.
31. I had good days and bad days. Some days I would wake up thinking that I was feeling well only to suddenly feel very unwell.
32. My brother and I had the course of treatment at the same time and we were able to support each other. Unfortunately the treatment was unsuccessful for my brother.
33. The treatment affected me financially, as I gave up my job **GRO-B** **GRO-B** in order to focus on the treatment. I managed to go back to it after I completed the course of treatment.
34. As I was unable to continue working **GRO-B** during my treatment, a friend offered me a position in her boutique as and when I was well enough to attend the shop. It was poorly paid however, it helped me get out of the house and helped me both mentally and physically.
35. The position also gave me a lot of flexibility, as on the days when I was particularly unwell I could call my friend and say that I was unable to assist on that day. Even after I finished the treatment I continued to assist my friend when I could until the boutique closed about five years ago.
36. I was not aware of any other treatments that were available at the time that were not given to me.
37. After my treatment I **GRO-B** worked from home.
38. In about **GRO-B** after my diagnosis and before my treatment, I was teaching **GRO-B** at a college. My initial boss, someone who had trained me, knew about my infection, I told him as I knew he would keep it private. However, he

## ANONYMOUS

left and those who replaced him saw my notes showing my infection. They made me feel very uncomfortable about it.

39. They were extremely cruel to me. They would write nasty comments in my diary, such as: "make sure that you don't infect people with your blood", I was always very cautious. I really enjoyed my job, but I felt I could not stay there and handle the abuse.

40. After that, I kept my condition to myself and I became very private, in order to protect myself and prevent any similar situations from taking place.

41. Even when I was going through the treatment I just tried to get on with it. I would not get my son and husband involved.

42. My husband worked very long hours, he left home by 8am and was not back till at least 7pm so I was on my own most of the time. I do not think that he was aware of what I was going through at the time. He is also not very practical though he would make me a cup of tea in the morning. He also had to support the family and that is what he focused on.

43. The only people that I chose to tell about my illness were my husband, son, and my family. None of my friends knew about it except for the owner of the boutique where I worked.

44. When I was receiving treatment, I told my next-door neighbour about it, in order for her to keep an eye on me. She was very supportive.

45. It was a very difficult time for me, as our family was very sociable. We often had dinner parties with friends, so we had a lot of social events to attend. It was hard, as regardless of the fact that I was going through so much, emotionally and physically, I was not able to tell them anything about it.

**Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

46. Following my treatment, I did receive counselling; however, it did not prove to be of great help. I recall telling the counsellor that he had lovely hands and he burst into tears saying that his mum used to say that to him. In the end I felt I was counselling him!
47. I had counselling once a week for two weeks and a similar thing happened the second time.
48. However I feel I did benefit from listening to him, it did make me feel good but it did not really help with my problems.
49. I have also been to see spiritualist healers over the years which have assisted.

**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

50. Around GRO-B I received about £20,000 from the Skipton Fund.
51. At the moment I receive around £3,000 per year from, I believe, the England Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS). I have been receiving the payments for the past two years.
52. I have not received any grants from any trusts or funds.
53. I found out about the financial assistance from my sister-in-law; however, I am not sure how she found out about it.
54. The application process was straight forward and I did not have any problems applying.
55. I do not recall having any pre-conditions imposed on me.

**Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

56. I confirm that I wish to apply for anonymity and that I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

57. I do not wish to be called to give oral evidence.



# ANONYMOUS

## Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-B

GRO-B

Dated 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019