

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN1720001

Exhibits: 0.

Dated: March 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 My date of birth is GRO-B 1977 and I live at GRO-B
GRO-B
2. I am married with no dependants. I am currently in full time employment. I suffer from severe Haemophilia A and I was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV), Hepatitis B (HBV) and the Human Immune Deficiency Virus (HIV) from contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full 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 Infected

4. In GRO-B 1978 I was diagnosed with severe Haemophilia A with a 0% clotting factor.

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5. I received regular treatment for my bleeds initially at [GRO-B] Children's Hospital and in my adult life at [GRO-B] Hospital, [GRO-B]
6. [GRO-B]
NOT RELEVANT
7. I became HIV positive between June 1983 and 1984. I became HBV positive in April 1985 and my HCV was first noted in February 1994. All of these infections were a direct result of being given contaminated blood products.
8. In 1985 [GRO-B] called a meeting with a number of parents whose children were patients of the hospital and stated that a number of patients had been infected with HIV. He then went on to say that if any parents would like to find out if their child had been infected with HIV that he would tell them individually.
9. My mother never asked [GRO-B] if I was HIV positive as she was afraid. She found out when I was in hospital. My notes were hooked on to the end of my bed. It was recorded that I was HIV positive. She went and asked for more information but I am not sure at this time what she was told.
10. My mum did not tell me at this time; she thought I was far too young to understand and to cope with this information. She agreed with the hospital and [GRO-B] to tell me in 1990.
11. I was informed by [GRO-B] in June 1990 that I was HIV positive. I remember meeting with him at the [GRO-B] Children's Hospital and I remember the room but I cannot remember specifically what I was told.
12. I had seen the horrible tombstone adverts on television and in the late 1980's and reports of people dying due to AIDS. I did not know what my future held.
13. Having said that I was told that developing AIDS was not currently an issue because my levels were healthy. This made me reluctant to start treatment for my HIV.
14. In 1990 I was told about the risks of cross infection and I was also told to be careful about bleeding, exchanging of other bodily fluids and sharing tooth brushes. My mother has also said that she received information about HIV at the time I was told.

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15. It was my parents' decision not to tell me as soon as they had found out and the doctors dealt with this as sympathetically as possible.

Section 3. Other Infections

16. I was hospitalised with pneumonia as a result of not taking my medication correctly in 2008. I did also receive a letter from the GRO-B Hospital stating that some haemophilia patients had received blood products which had been donated by a donor who had since passed away from vCJD. I have heard nothing further since.

Section 4. Consent.

17. I know that my blood was tested regularly with regard to clotting levels. I was not aware that I had been tested for HIV, HCV or HBV.

Section 5. Impact

18. Throughout the course of my childhood, I tried to put my HIV infection to the back of my mind as I knew that my levels were good and I was not at risk of it developing into AIDS. However, I was aware from the media that famous people were dying with AIDS and I did become increasingly worried. It set me back mentally and I began to worry that I too would die from it.

19. When I was growing up my mother found it very difficult to leave me with other people who were not aware of my condition. Equally she did not feel able to tell my friends and their parents about it because of the huge stigma it attracted.

20. In addition to this, during my college education I found out that a friend of mine from the hospital had passed away because of HIV. This made me wonder if there was in fact any point in continuing to work and invest in my future as I did not know how long I had left to live. As a result I dropped out of college and spent a number of years living alone.

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21. It had a detrimental effect as I was unable to get a job. Instead I just lived off the compensation I had received because of the infections and savings from my family.
22. I became involved in relationships but they broke down when I told my partners about the fact I was infected with HIV. I felt isolated because I had to keep it to myself and I could only tell close family and friends.
23. A physical impact of the infections was that I was hospitalised with pneumonia as a result of not taking my medication correctly circa 2008. I am currently on anti-viral medication to manage my HIV. In 2018 I received treatment for my HCV and have since been cleared of HCV.
24. There have been no obstacles in terms of me accessing any kind of treatment. In the early years I had to start with tablets which made me feel very nauseous and gave me terrible nightmares.
25. My haemophilia treatment has not been affected and I have remained under the care of the Haemophilia Unit both as a child and as an adult. I currently receive dental care at the hospital in the haemophilia clinic. I remember at the time of the HIV outbreak in the news that the hospital covered all surfaces including taps and light switches in cling film or something similar when we were being treated. I can only assume that was to prevent cross contamination; I do believe that this was excessive.
26. Living with HIV has affected my life in a number of ways. When I was first told about the virus, I was not sure what my future would hold for me. As I have said there were some high profile stories in the media which only heightened my worries.
27. I lived by myself and I stopped trying to find a job; I was afraid any employer would start to question my frequent hospital visits and to put two and two together with my haemophilia.
28. I shied away from forming a solid romantic relationship because I did not want to tell people about my HIV and risk it being common knowledge.
29. After a number of years, however, with no serious deterioration in my health, I decided to rethink my future and I attended college again. I also started exploring the possibility of finding a girl to settle down with.

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30. I would only tell any girlfriend when I felt comfortable with our relationship or when it started to get serious. A number of relationships broke down when I told my partners about my HIV because of the stigma surrounding the infection and their lack of knowledge. It has to be said that despite all of this and whilst HIV has hugely affected relationships I have been fortunate to have a number of long term partners.
31. My wife and I have never had the option or privilege to be able to have children because of the virus. Being HIV positive still has its obvious drawbacks, especially when being intimate as I would never wish to pass it on to my wife.
32. I have always been careful as to who I reveal my HIV infection to in my social circles. I only ever tell my closest friends as I do not know how some people would react.
33. My family has always been very supportive of me and our relationship has never been impacted. My mother has never been able to discuss the fact that I am HIV positive with anyone else due once again to the stigma surrounding it.
34. When I have an appointment at the HCV clinic, I book these days off as annual leave so as to not raise suspicion. I have fortunately become immune to the HBV which was in March 2018 and the treatment for my HCV has been fairly painless because of the great advances in modern medicine. I did suffer with some headaches when starting this treatment.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

35. I was counselled when I was a child. The offer has been there when I have been to the hospital but I have never taken anyone up on their offer of counselling.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

36. The hospital told my mother about the MacFarlane Trust. I receive monthly payments but cannot be specific with the amounts. I have also received a number of grants for deposits towards Motability cars, a washing machine and new windows and doors for my house.
37. I have written letters to the MacFarlane Trust on a few occasions to apply for grants and in my experience I had no problems. I have always received money I have applied for.

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Section 8. Other Issues

38. In the HIV litigation in the early 1990s my parents applied on my behalf. The money was paid into Court because I was a minor. My parents were told that they had to sign a disclaimer to receive this money. They had to sign it by a certain date. They were told that if this was signed they could not take any further legal action regarding any other blood infections in order for this payment to be made. My mother signed it at the very last minute.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

39. I do wish to apply for anonymity and I understand that this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry. I do not wish to give oral evidence.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

GRO-B

Dated 24/03/2019