

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN3468001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated:

## 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 22 July 2019.

I, GRO-B, will say as follows: -

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1955 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a university lecturer at the GRO-B. I intend to speak about my experience with Hepatitis C and the effect that it has had on my life and the lives of those close to me.

### Section 2. How Infected

2. In 1974 I had a serious motorbike accident as a result of which my spleen was ruptured. This necessitated a traumatic splenectomy, some

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six hours after the accident, which I had at Hillingdon Hospital on 23rd June 1974.

3. During this operation, I was transfused with two units of blood. I had no choice in the matter as it was emergency surgery. I was not advised of any risks associated with blood transfusions.
4. After the operation, I took about four or five weeks off from work. I returned to work and had no health issues. I was fit and healthy.
5. In 2016 I decided to visit to my GP for a blood test to check for Hepatitis-C. This was prompted by my sister who knew I had received a blood transfusion in 1974, and who had recently heard about the "infected blood scandal".
6. I had an appointment with my GP on 28 August 2016 and was referred to GRO-B for tests.
7. On 9 February 2017, I was given an appointment at GRO-B  
GRO-B I was there diagnosed with Hepatitis C by Dr Sherman.
8. Dr Sherman was very matter of fact. He told me that I would be called in for another appointment to discuss treatment options.
9. At that point of my diagnosis, Dr. Sherman was fairly certain that it was the blood transfusion that had led to my contracting the virus.
10. I was treated in 2018, which I have detailed below. I have since been cleared of the virus.
11. On 6 March 2019, I had an elastography on my liver followed by a MRI scan on 22 March 2019. I went for a second liver scan on 21 July 2019. I was then referred for a liver biopsy at Northwick Park Hospital which took place on 21st May 2019.

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12. These procedures identified a lesion in the top half of my liver and mild inflammation. I was also told that I have a stage 6 level 3 cirrhotic liver, although I was not clear about what that meant.
13. On 21st July 2019 at Northwick Park Hospital, I had another MRI liver scan. Following this I was given an appointment at the Royal Free Hospital on 16th September 2019 with Prof. Massimo Pinzani, at whose suggestion I underwent another liver biopsy at the Royal Free Hospital on 9th October 2019.
14. On 11th November 2019 I had a meeting at the Royal Free Hospital with Dr. Aileen Marshall who told me that I do have cirrhosis, but the nodules were indeterminate in nature, on the same day I had another MRI liver scan at that hospital.
15. On 19th November 2019, I was informed of the result of this scan by phone by Nurse Maria Ciaponi informing me that Hepatocellular Carcinoma (HCC) had been detected between the MRI scan at Northwick Park Hospital on 21st July 2019 and the MRI scan at the Royal Free Hospital on 11th November 2019.
16. She informed me of two possible curative options:
  - i. - Resection, which was the Royal Free Hospital's preferred option, this would entail 2 further tests before surgery to ascertain my physical fitness for the operation: these were an ICG test (with contrast), and a Wedge test, testing liver pressure through the neck.
  - ii. - Ablation was their second option.
17. On 27th November 2019 I was informed, much the same as nurse Ciaponi had told me by phone, but this time by letter from Dr. Marshall that my MRI scan at the Royal Free Hospital on 11th November 2019 was now reported as HCC and the hospital would evaluate me for liver resection.

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18. Then at the Royal Free Hospital on 3rd December 2019 I was given a chest scan, followed on the 9th December 2019 by a hepatic wedge pressure test and an ICG test.
19. On 27th December 2019 at the Royal Free Hospital I had a meeting with Prof. Joerg-Matthias Pollok and Dr. Amjad Khalil. They informed me of the liver resection operation they proposed to perform and told me of all the associated risks involved.
20. On 31st December 2019 at the Royal Free Hospital I had an appointment with their surgery nurse at the Pre-Assessment Unit.
21. On 20th January 2020 I was given a CT scan at the Imaging Department of the Royal Free Hospital.
22. Having been given a date of 5th February 2020 for my resection operation, I arrived at 7.30 a.m. waited until 2.30 p.m, when I was told my operation was cancelled as prior operation had overrun its timetabling.
23. My resection operation took place on 12th February 2020 7.30 a.m. the Royal Free Hospital. I had Segment 4a wedge resection and cholecystectomy T-tube inserted into CBD. I remained in hospital from 12th to the 22nd February 2020.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

24. I do not believe that I have received any infection or infections other than Hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood or blood products.
25. I know that I contracted Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B when I was in Afghanistan in 1977 as a result of contaminated food and / or water. My body naturally cleared the infection.

**Section 4. Consent**

26. I do not believe that I have been tested without my consent.

**Section 5. Impact**

27. I am thankful that I was treated and am clear of the virus. However, having been diagnosed with liver cancer and undergone resection surgery I have not escaped serious and life-threatening damage. I have also been informed by Prof. Pollok at the Royal Free hospital that I may well require a liver transplant in the future if the liver cancer re-emerges.

28. I have noticed that since the treatment for hepatitis C, I have felt slow and groggy in the mornings. I used to be very much a "morning person" so I have had to change the way I work a bit. The "mental fog" wears off and I work later now rather than in the morning.

29. The fact that I had Hepatitis C did worry my family at the time, but not hugely.

30. My wife was tested and she is clear.

31. I have suffered no real financial impact.

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

32. At the follow-up appointment after my diagnosis, I was offered 24 weeks of treatment with ribavirin and pegylated interferon.

33. I had done some research and knew that this treatment is rather dated, not particularly effective and has horrible side effects. I found it strange that this was the treatment that was offered to me.



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34. I knew that there a shorter treatment existed. When I asked about it, I was told that I could buy the medication online and the hospital would supervise me on the programme.
35. I thought that the suggestion of buying medication online was bizarre. The fact that I was not being offered the shorter treatment made me think that there was a budgetary issue.
36. I refused the treatment with ribavirin and pegylated interferon. I was told that given my decision, I need not attend my next scheduled appointment.
37. I then received a letter informing me that I had missed my appointment. This really irked me.
38. I was later informed by a nurse, Wendy Mayne, that I was eligible for a new treatment (Epclusa) as the guidelines had changed as a result of a new policy.
39. I began the three month treatment in May 2018. I was prescribed and took Epclusa (400mg). My understanding is that each tablet contains sofosbuvir and velpatasvir.
40. I feel lucky that I received this treatment as there were no side effects that I can think of, and the treatment cleared me of Hepatitis C. The treatment was effective and efficient.
41. After I finished the treatment, I had four or five blood tests at monthly intervals. These confirmatory tests as well as the MRIs and elastography and biopsy were initiated by the NHS. I was impressed by this proactive approach.

**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

42. I have never received any financial assistance. Since my diagnosis with HCC I have begun applying to the EIBSS. I will detail this in a 2<sup>nd</sup> statement when my appeal has been dealt with.

**Section 8. Other Issues**

43. I think it is quite poor that I was never contacted by the NHS to have an HCV test despite knowing that I had had a blood transfusion in 1974.

44. I also think that the way in which the NHS communicates with patients makes it very hard to understand one's health and how to deal with it. If one has no medical background, the information is not accessible.

45. I never really felt that I was made to understand the extent of damage to my liver. I feel quite in the dark about it. Not realising the serious implications of Hepatitis-C, I only began to feel really concerned about my condition after being diagnosed with HCC.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

2/12/20