

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN27450001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: September 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B**

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

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B** I was born on the **GRO-B**  
My address is **GRO-B** | **GRO-B**  
**GRO-B** I am employed as a **GRO-B**
2. I was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of receiving 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 referred to in this statement.

### Section 2. How Infected

4. On the **GRO-B** I was the victim of a road traffic accident. I was knocked down by a police motorcycle in **GRO-B** I sustained serious injuries and had severe blood loss from an open leg wound. I was rushed to the hospital after the accident.

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5. I was treated at St. George's Hospital in Tooting Broadway. I had two broken legs, a fractured skull and a crushed pelvic region. Due to the extent of my injuries I had to receive a blood transfusion, I believe I required 6 units of blood. I underwent numerous surgeries and was in hospital for three months.
6. I was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated blood.
7. I was given a blood transfusion in an emergency situation and so I was not informed beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection.
8. In the months following the blood transfusion, while I was still in the hospital, I remember complaining to the doctor of being very dizzy and feeling sick. I was very pale and my eyes were yellow. I was told that this was my body's response to the anaesthetic and the surgery I had undergone. Looking back, I had all the symptoms of chronic Hepatitis C yet medical professionals still discharged me from hospital without diagnosing the infection.
9. After I was discharged from the hospital, I went back home to Ireland. I still felt dreadful and I went to see my GP in Ireland who diagnosed by me with an unknown form of Hepatitis, referred to at the time as 'Hepatitis non-A, non-B'. I was told that I was in grave health and that I wasn't going to 'make it'.
10. I went back to St George's Hospital where I saw Dr Maxwell, who was a top liver specialist at the time. Dr Maxwell confirmed that I had Hepatitis C. He was very rude to me. He told me there was nothing anyone could do for me and that I would die within the next 3 months. I do not recollect being given any advice at all at the time on how to manage the infection. I broke down and refused to leave the hospital, I said it was them who had done this to me and that I needed help. They got a nurse to remove me from the room and I left the hospital.
11. St George's Hospital did not handle my infection sensitively. First of all, they sent me home without testing me for infection, even though all the signs were there. I had to go to my GP to be diagnosed. When I went back to the hospital, they confirmed that I had Hepatitis C but the news was delivered to

me in a cold and aloof way. I felt like vermin when I was told, I had to remind the doctor that I got this infection from his hospital and that I wasn't a prostitute or a drug user. I felt like the consultant was looking down on me. He made me feel dirty. Sadly, the feeling of being dirty has stuck with me.

12. A short time later, I received a letter in the post from St George's Hospital saying that they were able to see me again in relation to my infection.

13. I returned to St George's Hospital and was told that they said they would get me seen by experts. The staff at St George's Hospital were very good to me and from this point onwards I believe they provided me with phenomenal care and treatment. I was referred to Dr [GRO-B] from [GRO-B] and Dr [GRO-B] who was a specialist in unknown illnesses in the US at the time.

14. I was signed up to what I refer to as the 'guinea pig program' which I was told had a 50/50 success rate of treating Hepatitis C at the time. The program required me to go on a course of Interferon treatment.

15. I remained under the care of Dr [GRO-B] and Dr [GRO-B]. I had a dietician and a health worker that I saw every week. They gave me some advice in relation to the treatment (Interferon) and information on how to look after myself and how to avoid transmitting the virus.

16. The Interferon treatment reduced my infection to a low level but did not completely clear the infection. The last time I had a blood test was last year. The results show that I still have Hepatitis C.

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

17. Mentally I wouldn't be able to cope with knowing that I had any other infections and so I have not asked to be tested for anything else. I want to assume that I would have been told if I had anything else.

18. I feel that having Hepatitis C is bad enough and that I cannot deal with being infected with HIV or any other infections in addition to this. I think if I did have HIV and hadn't been medicated I would be dead at this point anyway.

#### **Section 4. Consent.**

19. I was rushed into hospital following my accident and woke up after emergency surgery. I wouldn't have been able to consent to blood transfusion.

20. My treatment with Interferon was experimental. It was the only choice I was given and I made the decision to go ahead with the treatment. Other than this I am not aware if I was ever used for research purposes in relation to my infection.

#### **Section 5. Impact**

21. I moved to London from Northern Ireland intending to work and go to university. At the time of my accident I was working and attending college one day per week. Up to this point I was a healthy young lady with a healthy life style. I had never had any major issues with my health.

22. I was treated for the physical injuries I sustained in the road traffic accident. I had skin grafts due to my injuries, and I had to learn how to walk again. I was in hospital for 3 months. I believe that my physical injuries took longer to heal because of my Hepatitis C infection.

23. At the time of my discharge I was still on crutches. I was also very ill with what I now know was Hepatitis C. I lost a lot of weight and by the time of my discharge I weighed less than 8 stones. I couldn't eat or drink, my skin itched and I had terrible diarrhoea and dizziness. My skin had turned brown and my eyes were yellow. I looked like I was going to die. I had all the symptoms which I now know are associated with Hepatitis C, yet the hospital showed no interest in trying to work out what was wrong with me and discharged me. I was discharged at midnight and a friend of mine had to drive down from

**GRO-B** to pick me up.

24. I went home to Northern Ireland after my discharge. I was still very ill and I went to see my GP who diagnosed me with Hepatitis (non-A, non-B). When I went back to St George's Hospital they confirmed a diagnosis of Hepatitis C but treated me very poorly and told me that I was going to die.
25. It was only after I was referred to Dr. **GRO-B** and Dr. **GRO-B** that I was provided with good care. Even then the hospital first of all denied that I had contracted Hepatitis C from the treatment they had given to me following my accident. Then, when they finally accepted that they were responsible for infecting me I was told that I wasn't entitled to compensation because in the early 1990s there was no screening for Hepatitis and it therefore was not their fault that I had been infected.
26. I underwent a very intense year of Interferon treatment. I was hospitalised initially and the treatment was administered by health professionals. After this period I injected myself every day and attended hospital twice weekly for treatment.
27. The side effects I went through on Interferon were horrific. I was not able to study or work during this period and I was hospitalised quite often.
28. The Interferon treatment had a good impact and my symptoms improved. It took 4 years for me to recover fully. The treatment did not completely clear my Hepatitis C infection but I have been told it is at a low level and that I do not have cirrhosis of the liver. My last test was a year ago.
29. I am not under the care of any hospital medical team in respect of my Hepatitis C, however I am under my GP as a high risk patient which means that if I have anything wrong my treatment is expedited. My GP has told me that he intends to send me for annual liver function tests; I am yet to have my first one.
30. Having Hepatitis C has really affected me psychologically. I feel like I am living with something very dirty in me. These feelings are so bad that I once



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asked my doctor if I could have all the blood taken out of my body and new blood put in me.

31. I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder following my accident. I think this also had a lot to do with my infection with Hepatitis C. For me, being infected with Hepatitis C was the worst thing. I was able to recover from my physical injuries, but I still have that dirty virus in my system.
32. I have had counselling but the mental scarring I have had as a result of being infected with Hepatitis C is something that never goes away. I don't think I'll ever be free from it. It haunts me constantly. I live in fear. I do not feel able to tell anyone that I have Hepatitis C
33. The stigma around Hepatitis is a dreadful thing, it makes me feel dirty. It affects the way other people treat you.
34. I was in a relationship at the time when I contracted Hepatitis C. My boyfriend ran a mile because of my infection.
35. I have not told anyone about my infection other than my family and my best friend who I have known since university and who is like a sister to me. I understand that some of my own family are afraid of me because of my infection. I try to avoid anything that I think will involve a health screening because I feel unable to tell people that I have Hepatitis C.
36. I went to have an ear piercing about 5 months ago. I was asked to sign a consent form and I disclosed on this that I have Hepatitis C. Because of this, they refused to pierce my ear. I know people are afraid and I believe it is their right to refuse treatment, but it hurts when things like this happen.
37. I found that no dentist would touch me because I had Hepatitis C. For a long time I had to receive my dental treatment at St George's Hospital. I am now with a private dentist.

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38. Other than this, I have not experienced difficulty accessing medical treatment as a result of my infection.
39. I am single and not in a relationship. I don't want to tell people that I have this infection. I have tried to open up about my condition before but when you tell people they don't want to be with you. I'd rather not have to go through that anymore. I am GRO-B years of age now and I would rather remain on my own.
40. Having Hepatitis C has denied me the opportunity of ever trying for a baby. I would have loved to meet a husband, settle down and have a child but it could never happen for me. I wouldn't have been able to have a baby carrying this illness. Having unprotected sex can transmit it to a partner and it can also transmit it to your baby if you do have one, I would never want to take that risk.
41. During my illness and treatment for Hepatitis C I had no way of supporting myself. I had no social worker and had no money to live on or support myself with. Things were very difficult for me financially. My family in Northern Ireland had to scrimp and save in order to pay £90 per week for my accommodation for me while I was ill and going through treatment for Hepatitis C. This was a lot of money at the time.
42. I am the eldest child of my parents and I moved to London with the intention of getting educated and doing well in order to help my siblings. I had to put my plans on hold. I was able to do this eventually, but it was a lot later than I had intended. I did very well at university, obtained a GRO-B GRO-B and now have a successful career.
43. My parents were very worried and afraid that I was going to die. They couldn't afford to come to London to help me. They tried to support me as much as they could. I come from a religious family and my parents shipped me off to various faith healers to try and cure me. I found this difficult and traumatic. My parents have now sadly passed away.

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44. I cannot get life insurance at a reasonable cost as a result of the fact I was infected from contaminated blood. It was difficult for me to get a mortgage but I was able to get one with the help of a financial adviser, although in order to do so I had to take out a very expensive insurance policy that I could barely afford at the time.

45. I live a healthy lifestyle. I eat well, I don't drink alcohol, I go to the gym and I play sport. I stay healthy in order to keep myself as well as possible. I try to stay positive and look at things in the best light possible.

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

46. I have received counselling in relation to my Hepatitis C infection. I believe St Georges Hospital recommended I get counselling.

47. I dread the thought of even going to hospital or receiving any forms of treatment so I generally avoid it at all costs

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

48. I have found that over the last 30 years, lots of doors have been closed in my face in relation to financial assistance.

49. I came across an advert regarding compensation for infected blood. It was in an Australian newspaper and I do not know why this was. I tried to apply for compensation with the help of a firm of solicitors. They made three applications for me between 2000 and 2009 but I was turned down each time. I understood that the reason I was turned down was because my application was out of time. I do not recall any further details regarding this.

50. My first ray of light was when my solicitors, Collins Solicitors, directed me towards organisations where I could receive funding.



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51. I was never informed about any of this before and I question why this information was never published or given to people like me who had been infected as a result of contaminated blood.

52. I applied to the EIBSS and I was awarded the sum of £10,000.00. I was told that my claim was backdated to October 2018 which was the date I submitted my application instead of to 1990 when I was infected with contaminated blood. This seems very unjust to me. I appealed but was not successful.

53. I believe the money I received should have been backdated to 1990 when I was infected. They have dismissed the fact I have lived with this infection for 30 years.

54. Through the EIBSS I now get a monthly allowance of £333. Every December I get a £500 winter allowance one off payment.

55. I do not consider the amount of compensation I received to be adequate.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

56. I took legal action in relation to the injuries I sustained in the road traffic accident in 1990 that led me to receiving blood transfusions. The case was difficult to pursue because it was against the police and although I was successful I only recovered £10,000.00. In the course of my personal injury claim, I was given some paperwork by my solicitor that suggested the World Health Organisation had asked the UK to screen blood for Hepatitis C. I believe this shows how little they cared in the UK as they didn't follow up on this advice.

57. I believe that the way St Georges Hospital managed things following my infection was wrong. They did not help me after I was infected, even though they were the ones who had infected me with Hepatitis C.

58. I also feel that I should have been told about funds or grants or any support that was available to me.

59. It hurts me that nobody has ever fully taken accountability for what happened to me.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

60. I wish to remain anonymous.

61. I am not willing to provide oral evidence to the inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Sign

GRO-B

Dated

30/4/20