

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN3222001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 05 July 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

GRO-B will say as follows:-

**Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is GRO-B I live at GRO-B  
GRO-B I am married to GRO-B and GRO-B have GRO-B  
children GRO-B I currently work part time in  
GRO-B

2. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my medical records.

**Section 2. How infected**

3. I was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) GRO-B I am  
not certain of the exact date as I cannot find the paper work but I was around 14  
or 15 years old. After the assault I was taken to GRO-B I  
suffered GRO-B in the assault as well as GRO-B

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4. Once I arrived at the hospital I had an emergency operation to **GRO-B** as it was broken in multiple places. I was in intensive care for some time and I was in hospital for what seemed like forever, but it was probably around a week.
5. During my stay in hospital I was given plasma. I remember two bags of yellowish liquid. My mother and I remember asking what it was for and we were told it was plasma to 'help rebuild the lost blood'.
6. I was not given any information or advice beforehand about the risk of being exposed to infection from blood products. My mother does not recall any advice or information being provided to her either.
7. I had been a fairly regular blood donor. After I moved to **GRO-B** I went to give blood at the local university in about **GRO-B**. After I gave blood it was screened following which I received a letter from the National Blood Transfusion Service, saying that I needed to see my doctor because HCV antibodies had been detected in my blood.
8. I made an appointment to see my GP and he referred me to the Haematology Department of the **GRO-B** **GRO-B**. The specialist I saw was **GRO-B** **GRO-B** who confirmed I had HCV.
9. The National Blood Transfusion Service did what they had to do when they informed me that I had HCV antibodies. They had no choice but to send me a letter and I did appreciate being informed.
10. However I was not very satisfied with the follow up appointments at the hospital. I was told there was nothing they could do as there was no treatment available for HCV and I was told I would just be monitored. So over the next few years I went

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to the hospital on a regular basis and had blood tests, I gave a number of samples. I also had a biopsy on my liver which was not a very nice experience.

11. The hospital provided scant information to me about HCV. I was given standard advice and a short leaflet concerning not sharing needles or toothbrushes. At the time of the diagnosis I was in a long term relationship and I asked if HCV could be transferred to my partner. I was informed there was no real risk. The advice was not great but that was all they could do.

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

12. I do not believe I have received any other infections. I was tested for HIV and the result was negative.

### **Section 4. Consent**

13. As I have said when I was diagnosed with HCV I was told there was no treatment available and all they could do was to monitor the situation. They did all sorts of tests and brought me in for a biopsy. I felt I was being treated as a guinea pig. The hospital was gathering data from my test results. I was not happy about that at the time. This went on for two or three years.

### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

14. I was worried initially when I was diagnosed. No one knew what it meant long term. The doctors at the hospital said they did not know what the impact would be. They noticed a slight imbalance in my liver results but said there was no reason to worry as there were no signs of cancer. I went away not knowing a great deal so over time I became less worried.

15. Also initially after the diagnosis I still felt normal physically.

16. Towards the end of the **GRO-B** I injured my back and I was prescribed heavy medication, I felt quite ill. I underwent tests at the hospital and the liver results were askew so I was referred back to the hospital for a scan. The result of the scan showed I had pronounced cirrhosis of the liver as a result of the HCV not being treated sooner and the heavy medication I was taking compounded my condition.
17. Apparently most painkillers and anti-inflammatory medication cannot be taken by patients with liver conditions. So when I am now prescribed such medication the doctor has to consult liver team before giving me the prescription. The current recommendation for liver patients is not to take any painkillers.
18. At the time of the cirrhosis diagnosis, I was suffering quite a bit physically. I was suffering with a lack of energy, low concentration, problems with short term memory recall, fluid retention, bloating and sickness. I was just generally feeling unwell all the time.
19. Once they told me I had cirrhosis I had two choices, stop taking the painkilling medication and live with the pain from my back or carry on taking the medication knowing it was damaging my liver. I made a decision after a consultation with my doctor and I opted to come off the medication for my back all together. As a result I have seen an improvement in my health. I have since had radiotherapy denervation for the nerve pain in my back, hips and legs which has resolved a significant proportion of my back pain.
20. Within the last few years I have received treatment for HCV. The treatment involved interferon and I was taking two different tablets a day. It was a fairly short treatment, only lasting a few weeks. The treatment was successful and I was told recently that I had long term viral clearance.

21. I should have received treatment prior to this but the hospital placed conditions on me receiving the treatment that was available at the time. I was told that I had to first have a liver biopsy. I did not want to go through a biopsy again so it took a long time for me to get treatment. I have been told that if I had received treatment sooner I would probably not have cirrhosis. I think the HCV treatment should have been made available immediately without restrictions being placed on it. I feel strongly about this.
22. I did not have any side effects when I finally received the HCV treatment.
23. As I have developed cirrhosis I may need a liver transplant in the future. I have regular ultra sound scans. The scan will show bleeds, clots or cancer. I also have fibro scans as well which looks at the extent of the liver damage.
24. I worry people will find out about my condition. I have only told my wife, my mother and a close friend about my HCV infection. We have deliberately kept quiet about it because of the stigma associated with the condition.
25. I also cannot drink alcohol. If, for example, we have a barbecue I cannot enjoy a cold beer. I used to enjoy an occasional drink after work with colleagues, but I now have to avoid these occasions and socialising has changed as I tend to stay away from alcohol. Initially that was a struggle for me. I could not go near a pub. You feel you have to completely block it out to get to a point where it does not bother you anymore.
26. I have had to change my diet because of the cirrhosis. I was referred to a dietician who advised that I should eat carbohydrates throughout the day. As a result of the diet change I gained weight. However, if I do not eat carbohydrates regularly I find I will run out of energy and just crash. I find myself always carrying biscuits or crisps, for example, so I can top up my energy if I feel my levels dropping.

27. The infection did not affect my education. I carried on and went through college although if I had been fully informed about my condition I may not have drunk so much when I was there.

28. I did not have any work related difficulties until I became ill with cirrhosis. I was then struggling because of my back as well as lack of concentration and short term memory problems. I was a chartered professional so I was earning well before I had to give up work. I was a GRO-B My employer kindly retired me through a redundancy package as I had been with them for a good few years and I did quite well from it. I had a period of GRO-B when I was unable to work due to my lack of memory and concentration. However, around two months ago I managed to get back to work. My body does not work but my mind is coming back since being off the medications.

29. My mother worries about me and my wife gets fed up that I have been ill for so long. But she takes it in her stride; she is that sort of person. Our children get stressed as I cannot join in with them very often.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

30. I have faced difficulties obtaining health care. It is almost impossible to see a GP. It can take weeks or months to receive an appointment but once I start seeing a specialist at the hospital they have been great. The liver team has been fantastic and everybody seems to want to work together.

31. I have not been offered any counselling. I am not sure if it would have helped because I have not had any experience involving counselling and never tried it. However, I found it good to talk to my friend who has also been infected, he has Haemophilia, so maybe it would have helped.



**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

32. I have not received any financial assistance. I did apply to the Skipton Fund and they came back promptly and said my application could not proceed because they could not locate my medical records. I went to my GP and they said they did not have anything on their system going back as far as the assault. I then wrote to GRO-B to see whether they had my records. They confirmed my records had been destroyed. I have a letter dated 8 September 2016 from the Hospital confirming that the paper based records were destroyed in 2016.

33. I contacted the Skipton Fund again in 2016. We have been communicating backwards and forwards. I would be eligible for the stage 1 and 2 payments if I could prove I received a transfusion, the payments are a significant amount of money.

**Section 8. Other Issues**

34. I am grateful our voices are now being heard. It is a shame it has taken this long for people to take us seriously.

**Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

35. I am seeking anonymity and would like my statement redacted before publication. However I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

36. I would be happy to give evidence if it would assist. There is a lot of focus on people who have regular blood products but sometimes the people who had blood products on one occasion get forgotten.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed GRO-B .....  
GRO-B

Dated: 05/07/19 2019