

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN2816001

Exhibit: WITN2816002

Dated: April 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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FIRST WRITTEN WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRO-B

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I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B, but I am known as GRO-B. My date of birth is the GRO-B and I live at GRO-B. I am divorced, and I have GRO-B daughters and GRO-B granddaughters. I am retired from my job in GRO-B when I used to work in GRO-B.
2. This impact statement is made in relation to my late father, GRO-B: F, born on the GRO-B, who sadly passed away on the GRO-B aged GRO-B as a result of hepatitis which he contracted through blood transfusion.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my dad's medical records.

### Section 2. How affected

4. My dad had been caring for my mum for many years prior to her passing in [GRO-B] due to breast cancer. The stress of caring for my mum caused my dad to suffer from a duodenal ulcer in around [GRO-B]. He went to see his GP, who referred him to Barnet General Hospital. I went to my dad's hospital appointment with him, as [GRO-B]. At this appointment he was told that his ulcer had burst, so he would need to have an operation.
5. He had this operation to remove part of this stomach and to my understanding, the operation was successful. During that operation he had to have blood transfusion, as he had lost a significant amount of blood. When he came out of the operating theatre I went to visit him, and I recall him still having a blood transfusion.
6. As far as I am aware there was nothing mentioned about the potential risks associated with blood transfusion prior to or after the operation. I believe that what we both thought at the time was that the transfusion was a part of the operation.
7. My dad did not have any other blood transfusions in his life to my knowledge.
8. He returned back home after his operation and made a full recovery. We lived together at the time. Unfortunately, after about 6 months his health started to deteriorate quite quickly and he kept being sick. I recall one instance when I returned home from work with a friend of mine and there was blood all over the floor and stairs. I was terrified so I ran upstairs to my dad's bedroom where I saw him lying on the bed covered in blood. I quickly called the ambulance and he was taken into Barnet General Hospital, but he quickly returned back home and was still being ill.
9. At the time my dad was going for regular check-ups at the hospital and he had been in and out of the hospital a few times. I am aware that he had tests done during those check-ups; however, I am not aware what the tests were for, or whether he was aware of it.

10. I recall attending the last one of those check-ups with him which was about 2 weeks before he died. He expected to be taken into the hospital again, as he felt that something was wrong with him. He went into the room to be seen by a doctor while I waited outside.
11. Soon after I heard my name over the tannoy telling me to go to a certain room. I went into this room and there were 2 or 3 doctors sitting at a table, but my dad was not there with us; he was in the room next-door. I did not understand what was happening. One of the doctors suddenly said that they were sorry, but my dad did not have long to live.
12. I was in complete shock. I asked how long he had and what was wrong with him. They did not know how long he had and all they said was that he had cancer, but they did not specify what type of cancer. I remember this very distinctly as this was what happened to my mum and the reason why she had passed away GRO-B years before.
13. I was then asked by one of the doctors, whether I wanted to take my dad home or leave him at the hospital. It was very difficult for me, as I knew that if I took him home we both would be extremely uncomfortable. We did not have a relationship, whereby I could comfortably bathe him and care for him. He was quite Victorian in his way and he would have been embarrassed. The doctors then said that in that case they would keep him in the hospital. He was happy with that, as he did expect that he might have to stay in.
14. I visited him at the hospital every day for 2 weeks. Then on GRO-B my aunt, who had a telephone, came to see me at home and said that I could not go to work that day, as my dad had passed away.
15. When I got my dad's death certificate to my surprise, there was no mention of cancer or an ulcer on it. I was taken aback by this and I became rather suspicious. Instead, it stated the cause of his death was hepatic failure, cirrhosis

of the liver (non-alcoholic) and infective hepatitis. His death certificate mentions hepatitis; however it does not specify which type. I found out about my dad being hepatitis positive from his death certificate. I exhibit his death certificate at WITN2816002.

16. I did not go back to the hospital or speak to my dad's GP about it, as it was a very hectic period of time for me. I was engaged to be married with the wedding to be in [GRO-B]. My wedding took all my focus at the time and it took the stress away from what had happened to my dad. I had put it all at the back of my head and I did not think about it for a very long time.
17. I got married and had my daughters in [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] and then in the [GRO-B]. I started to do some temping work. My second placement was in accounts at the Blood Laboratories in Elstree, Hertfordshire, which is now called Bio Products Laboratory Ltd and this is what brought everything back up. I was there only for about a year, and unfortunately I do not recall when exactly I had worked there; however, I believe that it was between [GRO-B]. I recall an instance whereby my manager ([GRO-B]) and a couple of other people came in and started to talk about the contaminated blood. I did not know much about it at that point, but it soon started to make more sense to me, as I did have my suspicions regarding my dad before that.
18. In the conversation between my manager at the time and 2 other people I heard my manager say that at the end of financial year they had saved up a lot of money and they needed to spend it, as otherwise they would not get the same budget next year. He suggested having a picnic area for the staff with tables and chairs. At the time I did not understand the reason why they were under their budget, but I kept on hearing them speaking about this.
19. I tried to discretely question my manager about it. All I was told was that they had managed to purchase blood and blood products from America very cheaply. He also said that some of the blood was contaminated, so we had to be careful

because of it. I believe that what he meant by the last statement was to make sure that no more contaminated blood was distributed.

20. My daughter, GRO-B, used to work for NHS. She read my dad's death certificate recently and thought that it was strange that they had not specified which type of hepatitis he had.

21. I am not sure whether my dad knew anything about it. My aunt visited him very often, but I am not sure whether she had more knowledge about what was happening than me. My aunt has since passed away.

22. When the doctors told me that he was dying they asked me not to tell my dad about it. I do believe that if my dad had more information than me and he knew that he was dying, then he would have told me about it. He would have known that I would have been left on my own; and he would have wanted to prepare me for it.

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

23. I am not aware of my dad contracting any other infections as a result of his blood transfusion.

### **Section 4. Consent**

24. As mentioned above, I was never informed about my dad being hepatitis positive, and I do not believe that my dad was ever informed about it. It is clear that the doctors were aware of it so he must have been tested; however, I do not know when they discovered it.

25. I do not believe that my dad had given his fully-informed consent to be tested for hepatitis or any other infection.

26. Looking back at this now, I do think that the whole situation is very strange. My dad did have the mental capacity to process information, so I do not understand why the doctors told me about the fact that he was dying, but had not told him anything about it. It worries me from the patient confidentiality standpoint.

27. I am not aware of my dad's blood being used for research purposes.

### Section 5. Impact

28. I do not believe that my dad was particularly affected by hepatitis on the mental level, as I do not think that he was ever aware of having it at all. However he had some physical symptoms as I recall him having blood blisters on his arm. I recall asking him what they were and he responded that he did not know.

29. Also on the instance mentioned above, whereby I found him in bed with blood all over the floor and stairs, I am not sure where all the blood came from, but I can only assume that he was being sick.

30. To my knowledge my dad was not given any treatment for hepatitis. I do not believe that there was any treatment available for it at the time.

31. I do not believe that my dad's career was affected by his illness to a great extent. He returned to work soon after having his operation and he continued to work. My dad's job was his life. He was working for GRO-B and he really enjoyed it. Overall, my dad worked very hard the entire time. He kept on working overtime. I told him on a number of occasions that he should not be working so hard, but he insisted that he wanted to put some money away for my wedding. He wanted to make sure that I had everything I wanted. However, on the days when he was particularly unwell he went on sick pay; therefore he was working on and off.

32. My dad did not have any social life after my mum passed away, and after his operation. After my mum passed away we relocated from [GRO-B] to [GRO-B]. We had no friends in the new location and my dad made no effort to make friends, particularly after he became poorly so soon after the move. Therefore, he was not able to have any social life at all. He was a very likable and outgoing person; however, his job became his life. The only thing he would do is go out to a pub for a drink with me every now and again.
33. My dad was particularly poorly during the last two weeks of his life. He was in and out of the hospital, and by then he was in and out of being conscious. I had tried to keep it away from him that he was dying. I did not think that it would be of any help to tell him, as it would make no difference to him at that point.
34. On one occasion I went to visit my dad at the hospital and he told me that 2 priests had come in to give him last rights (we are Roman Catholic). He blamed me for it, but I did not know anything about it. I spoke to the hospital about it and they told me that it was a big mistake. It then became clear that it was the hospital who called in the priests, but my dad turned them away saying that it was a mistake.
35. When my mum passed away and my dad and I had moved out of [GRO-B], I started to take care of the house. Looking back at it now, I do find it quite worrying, as I could have been easily infected, not knowing about his condition or the appropriate precautions that I should have taken, particularly when cleaning. It is scary to think particularly about that one instance where I found a lot of blood on the floor, stairs and his bedroom. After my dad was taken to the hospital I was the one to clean it all up, scrubbing the carpet, floor and stairs, so putting myself at risk.
36. My dad's illness and his passing affected me greatly. I was only [GRO-B] years old at the time and I was left on my own, [GRO-B]. I was engaged, about to get married. I recall people telling me that I should still get married, as I would

be on my own, so I proceeded with it. It ended up being an awful decision, and I ended up getting divorced eventually. I have gone through an awful time in my marriage.

37. I had my reservations, as to getting married to that person from the beginning, and I believe that if it was not for my dad's passing, I would have his support for a longer engagement and I would not have proceeded with the marriage. I believe that my marriage was a form of reaction to my dad's death. It is still very hard for me to be on my own, because of all that had happened.

38. I then started to suffer from ill health myself. I have had depression on and off from my mum's death, throughout my life.. The depression first started when my mum passed away. I was put on antidepressants for a period of time; however, they completely knocked me out, as a result of which I was not able to think straight, so I refused to take them. I also had to work, so I could not afford to tolerate the side-effects of them. My depression was definitely aggravated by my dad's passing and I became suicidal.

39. Around [GRO-B] years ago I was given medication for depression again, but they had a negative effect on my kidney. I have had to cope with depression throughout my life, as the medication was not good for me. I only started to recover from it around three years ago.

40. I also suffered from [GRO-B] which was caused through the stress of the whole situation.

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

41. My dad was never given proper treatment for his hepatitis. He was treated with ordinary medications at the hospital, whenever it was necessary, but he did not receive anything hepatitis-related.



Section 7. Financial Assistance

42. None of us had any financial help from any of the trusts and funds set up.

Section 8. Other Issues

43. I am hoping that the Inquiry will bring closure to the people infected and their families.

44. It also makes me very angry to know that it has taken so much time for this inquiry to happen in the first place. It is outrageous.

45. Working at the Blood Laboratories opened my eyes to what was happening. It makes me very angry to know that they preferred to spend money on picnic tables, rather than better quality, safer blood.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

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

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

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed....

GRO-B

Dated.. 29-11-19