Witness Name: GRO-B
GRO-B
Statement No.: WITN4369001
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 6 July 2020.

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

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1954 and I reside in GRO-B.

2. I moved to the UK in 1966, along with my mother and siblings, to join my father. I have always lived in Scotland. I am married with three children from two wives. I run a number of post offices and convenience stores, and I have been doing this since 1979.

3. I intend to speak about my Hepatitis C infection ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on me and my family's lives.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I had a car accident on 30 November 1977 on the GRO-B motorway. I was seriously injured as a result and was taken to Weston Infirmary Hospital, Glasgow. I sustained several injuries including a split left eye, a fractured knee and my right leg was broken above the knee.

5. At the time of the accident, I recall bleeding profusely. I tried to get out of the car but I fell unconscious until someone came along and found me a little while after. I don't remember any of the doctors at the hospital, except for Dr Ali who was one of the junior doctors there at the time and I knew him from school. I was on morphine for a long time and I recall seeing a lot of drips attached to my arm. I believe that I was given a blood transfusion because I had lost a lot of blood. No one told me that there was a risk that the blood I was being given might be contaminated.

6. I was in the hospital for around 9 or 11 weeks in total. After I was discharged, I had to undergo physiotherapy 3 days a week for another month. I still walk with a limp to date.

7. In 2012, I went to the doctors as I was concerned because there was blood in my urine. At first, they thought it might be a kidney issue and advised that it would go away itself. When it persisted, the doctors decided to carry out a few tests.

8. In May 2013, I attended Inverclyde Royal Hospital Greenock, to get the result of one of these tests. There, one of the specialists informed me that I had contracted HCV. He told me that it would have been rare to

have contracted my kind of HCV sexually and that the only way I could have been infected was either through a blood transfusion or if I had been in contact with someone who had HCV.

9. I have never been an intravenous drug user, I don't have any tattoos and I have never lived a lifestyle that could have led to the risk of contracting HCV.

10. The doctor informed me that I would need to get treatment. Though it was expensive as it costs about £50,000 the Scottish Government had allocated funds to cover it, so I would be able to get treatment unlike in England. The doctor said that the treatment was severe, and I would feel very ill but it was something I would have to get through. They explained that the side effects included itchy skin and brain fog.

11. When the doctor explained what HCV was, while informing me of the diagnosis, it felt like someone had taken the earth away from under my feet?

12. After my diagnosis, my wife was tested for HCV as well as other STI's and everything was clear, which also proved that I wouldn't have gotten it through sexual contact.

Section 3. Other Infections

13. I do not believe that I have received any other infection other than Hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood or blood products.

Section 4. Consent

14. If I had known that there was a risk that the blood I was being given could be contaminated, I would not have consented to receive the

blood transfusion. I was only 23 years old at the time and contracting HCV has had a lasting impact on my life.

Section 5. Impact

15. Finding out that I had contracted HCV was mentally draining. After the doctor informed me of the diagnosis I could hardly walk to my car, and I drove home to tell my wife in a daze. I still have a lot of questions but there are no answers.

16. I was offered and started the treatment almost immediately after my diagnosis. The course of treatment prescribed was a combination of Interferon and Ribavirin tablets. The Interferon was injected into my stomach 3 days a week, Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays, while the Ribavirin was a daily tablet.

17. During the treatment, I was receiving alerts via text message 3 times a day reminding me to take my medication every 6 hours from 6 in the morning.

18. The first two weeks on the drugs were fine but afterwards, the drugs made me violently sick. I was very weak and tired and according to my wife, I was also depressed and angry. I cried a few times because I was feeling so bad. I could not work or drive because I felt so weak. I was running two businesses with my wife at the time but I could not physically manage them any longer.

19. I had been running one post office in GRO-B, while my wife ran the main city post office. However, once I began treatment, my staff had to step in to manage the running of the GRO-B post office. On one occasion, I recall I went into work to try to do the cash and carry run myself but I was throwing up and I ended up falling on the side of a shelf. I had to go back home after someone helped me get off the floor.

20. After the first two weeks, I started going to the hospital every week because I was being violently sick. I had two very kind nurses, Audrey and Ann at Inverclyde Hospital who looked after me.

21. The treatment was supposed to last 13 weeks but it was stopped after 9 weeks because the side effects were so severe. My stomach was swollen very badly and I had lost about 15kg and I had barely been eating throughout this period.

22. On one of my regular visits to the doctors in the 9th week, one of the nurses noticed my stomach and was very angry at me. She said that I should have come to the hospital 3 or 4 days earlier and that if my visit had been prolonged for another 4 or 5 days it could have had near-fatal consequences. I was given a blood transfusion of 3 bottles of blood to treat the severe side effects of the treatment, and I was told that my liver had been inflated.

23. After the treatment was discontinued, it took another 3 or 4 weeks for me to regain my energy levels.

24. My business did suffer as a result of my inability to work during this 9 - 12 week period. Additionally, my wife had to take me to all of my doctor's visits which also affected her availability to run our businesses.

25. I did not tell my children at first, but my 19 year old daughter who was still living with my wife and me at the time ended up finding out because of all the medication I was on and was very upset that we had not told her.

26. It was quite traumatic for my wife to see me like that. She said that she had not realised how much the treatment would affect me. She became

my primary caregiver as well, which was difficult for her. At one point she did not go to work for 5 weeks because she was looking after me most of the time. It was also reflected in our accounts at the end of the business year because there was a 5 month period where we made a loss for the first time.

27. My two sons do not know because I didn't want to upset the family in any way. My mother in law was 84 at the time and had just lost her husband and we didn't want this to affect her. My daughter was only 19 and had her higher exams coming up for university. I did not want it affecting her studies.

28. I had to wait for a 6 month check-up to find out if the treatment had worked. I was very worried but luckily in May 2015, I was told that I was HCV negative.

29. I am still on Thymine tablets 3 ~~times~~ a day to help my liver stabilise and I get a liver ultrasound every 6 months. I have scarring and cirrhosis of the liver. I have been told that it cannot be repaired but that in a few years' time if everything continues to go well they might carry out a liver transplant. I am currently getting by on whatever part of the liver I have left.

30. I still get pain in my knee, which is due to the car accident and pain in my side two or three times a week and that is due to the damage to my liver but it is not severe enough that I have to take anything for it.

31. I have high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes and low iron production so I have to take iron tablets. I am on about 7 medications including Omeprazole to eliminate gas from my stomach. Before having HCV and the associated treatment I was fine.

32. Since the treatment, I have also received up to 2 pints of blood within 18 months because my blood count had gone so low. On one occasion I was in the hospital for 2 days receiving a blood transfusion. I have had another three transfusions since then.

33. It has also affected my sexual relationship with my wife. Our sex life used to be active and now it's little to non-existent. At first, I was too embarrassed to go to the doctor but now they have prescribed Cialis for that and explained that it is related to the HCV.

34. I still get tired from time to time and I have restless sleep. The liver also tires me out so I go to bed early whenever that happens. Nowadays I take days off work and I never used to do that before. I don't feel like I can carry on working anymore.

35. My wife and I have recently been considering selling the business because it has become too much. I did not envisage selling the business for at least another 20 years. However I have now put it on the market and have even received one offer. My wife can still work but I can't any more.

36. We could not go on holiday for 2 or three years after I had treatment. First financially we were not able to do so, then holiday insurance companies refused to insure me so that made it difficult. We finally went on our first holiday in January 2019. I still have trouble accessing holiday insurance. The last holiday we went on was for a week in Turkey, some companies would not agree to insure me and in the end, I had to pay £500 for insurance.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

37. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support. I was really upset at the time of my diagnosis and during my treatment. I

believe that it would have been really helpful to have counselling for the first 6 or 9 months after my diagnosis.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

38. I found out about the Skipton Fund from one of the nurses at Inverclyde Hospital after my treatment. The nurses gave me some forms to fill in and send over.

39. The Skipton Fund said that they had checked with Weston Infirmary Hospital and that Weston Infirmary had no recollection of me receiving a blood transfusion so my application was refused. I did not appeal the refusal because it was a long application process.

40. I am planning to ask Weston Infirmary for my Medical records because I know that Dr Ali is still around Weston Infirmary.

41. I had no knowledge of the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme (SIBS) until today but I will get in touch with them. I think the SIBS was not advertised properly and I should be entitled to receive support from the scheme.

Section 8. Other Issues

42. I still think about my liver issues because I know of an extended family member who died of liver cirrhosis. I have read up on liver cirrhosis and have spent many sleepless nights worrying about whether I will be around to see my daughter get married. I worry about the future and whether I will be around for long.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 17/2/2021