

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN3632001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: September 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 of GRO-B
My date of birth is the GRO-B 1965. I live with my husband. Our children have grown up and have left our family home.
2. I was infected with Hepatitis C (Hep C) following a number of blood transfusions which I received on GRO-B 1990.
3. This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

4. On the GRO-B 1990 after giving birth to my second child at GRO-B General Hospital, I retained some placenta which caused severe bleeding. I was given 3 or 4 blood transfusions as a result. This was the only time that I received any blood products.
5. I recall telling the medical professionals that I did not want to have a blood transfusion at the time. I had an uncle who was working as a private nurse in New York City who passed away as a result of AIDS related illnesses and the

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advertising campaign at the time that warned against AIDS was large in my mind. I was terrified and I was totally against having any sort of blood products to include blood transfusions. I expressed this to the medical professionals at the time despite being very ill. However, they asked my mother to persuade me to have the blood transfusion, which I did.

6. The doctors did not discuss with me the potential risk of infection following a blood transfusion and nobody told me whether the blood had been heat treated or safe to use.
7. In 2007, I went to see my GP for a health check. I had a blood test and was later called back to the GP. The GP could not understand my blood result readings. He told me that an alcoholic patient visited him earlier in the morning and his blood readings, I think in terms of ALT, were lower than mine which he was flabbergasted by. I had another blood test at the GP later that week and I was told that I had Hep C. Following this, in early 2008 another blood test was carried out at the GRO-B General Hospital where it was reiterated that I had been infected with Hep C and it was following one of the blood transfusions I had received in the 1990. I believe I was provided with a leaflet regarding the infection.
8. I was terrified to learn that I had been infected with an infection that could kill me. Indeed, prior to the diagnosis I had never heard of Hep C. There was no 'nice way' of conveying this information so when I was given the diagnosis it was a shock to me. I should have been provided with more information earlier. I would have expected that the hospital and my GP at the time I had the blood transfusion would have investigated further, particularly as I was very anaemic on going home from the maternity ward. Had I not attended my current GP for a general health check, I would have never known about having been infected. Moreover, I should have been told about the risks of infection at the outset of receiving a blood transfusion.
9. My husband and daughter were tested for Hep C and they both tested negative. My son refused to be tested for Hep C and from this day on he

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maintains his status as he does not want to know if he has the infection or not.
We no longer talk about it because it causes a lot of tension between us.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. To the best of my knowledge I do not believe that I have not been exposed to any other infections other than Hep C as a result of the blood transfusions that I received.

Section 4. Consent.

11. I do not believe that I was treated or tested without my knowledge or consent.
12. I was not provided with full information in regards to the risks associated with the blood transfusions or Hep C once it was diagnosed.
13. I do not believe I was treated or tested for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

14. The infection affected my career as a GRO-B Prior to the infection I was regularly promoted as I was a hard worker and I had never had a sick day from work. The diagnosis affected my career progression as I was unable to apply for promotions because I did not know how sick I would become once the Hep C treatment commenced. I continued to work and I did not suffer from physical effects from the infection but the treatments (two in total) I had made me severely ill. By the time the second treatment cleared the Hep C, other colleagues had overtaken me in the career progression and I have been unable to fully fulfil my career prospect as a GRO-B This had a financial impact on me and my family.
15. I did not know the severity of the infection or the impact it would have on my health and whether or not I might die within 6 months, which was devastating for me and my whole family. We were all upset because we did not know what to expect. We organised funeral arrangements in case the worst happened which was a fearful time for all of us. I now have Rheumatoid Arthritis and this is seriously impeding my life. I do not know if this is linked to

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the onslaught my immune system was subjected to during two bouts of Hep C treatment.

16. I was admitted to hospital for kidney failure, liver failure and jaundice in 2013.

The doctors explained to me that it was a bad reaction to the antibiotics I was taking at the time but I remain unsure as to whether this was a medical complication directly related to the Hep C.

17. I was diagnosed with cirrhosis in or around 2012 as a result of the Hep C.

18. In 2009 I had a combined treatment of Interferon and Ribavirin for Hep C. The course lasted approximately 12 weeks and the doctors decided to stop the course as my blood results indicated that it had no effect on my viral load. The side effects of this treatment were awful and I suffered from a really bad reaction to the drugs. My body swelled up and my skin peeled off mainly on my hands and face. My white blood count drastically dropped and I was off from work for many weeks due to this. Additionally, I suffered from weight loss and flu-like symptoms. It took me a long time to recover from this treatment.

19. I remember going to the Hep C clinic and queuing there to get medication. It was a really dark time for me. I had to go to the GP to get a sick note and I felt isolated when I was off from work. I resented the fact that I was not given priority treatment as I had the disease from a transfusion. I respected in principle the idea that all patients were treated the same, but in reality I felt I should be prioritised for treatment.

20. In 2017 I had a second course of treatment called Sofosbuvir which lasted approximately 6 months. Prior to obtaining this treatment, my doctors told me that the treatment will become available to me once it became cheaper. I battled for almost 3 years to get it. I suffered from a reaction to one of the tablets from the first course of treatment which was included in the second course and I had to stop taking it for a while. The second course of treatment cleared the infection.

21. I do not know whether any other treatments were available to me at the time because no alternative treatments were discussed with me. However, when

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the doctors recommended the treatments which I had, they gave me an indication of the side effects prior to starting both the courses. I now attend regular check-ups at the hospital for my liver.

22. From the day of the diagnosis to the day I had cleared the Hep C, I suffered a long period of depression and there was a constant fear for me and my whole family. I did not know what a huge burden I had carried until I cleared the infection. During that time everything was tinted with sadness; I feared that I wouldn't see my daughter get married or spending time with my grandchildren. My children were quite resilient and did not let it affect their education.

23. Whenever we went on holidays the premium for travel insurance was considerably higher than usual, which I believe was directly as a result of the infection.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

24. I received no psychological support or counselling as a result.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. In 2009 I received a Stage 1 payment in the sum of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund.

26. In 2012 I received a Stage 2 payment in the sum of £50,000 from the Skipton Fund because I was diagnosed with cirrhosis.

27. I receive a monthly payment from the EIBSS in the sum of £1,500, which began in or about 2013.

28. I also receive prepaid prescriptions.

29. The application forms for financial assistance were straightforward and there were no preconditions imposed when making the applications.

Section 8. Other Issues

30. I have no additional comments to make.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

31. I would like to apply to retain my anonymity.

32. I do not wish to give oral evidence to the Inquiry and I understand that my statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated 25th September 2019