

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN5313001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 22 May 2021

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 15 February 2021.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B 1968
and my address is GRO-B
GRO-B
2. I am married to my husband GRO-B Together we have two daughters,
GRO-B and GRO-B and her husband GRO-B have two
daughters GRO-B and GRO-B who are two years old and seven
months. I am retired. I stopped working in January 2020 to help with
my grandchildren.

3. Prior to that I worked in the NHS. I have had various roles, latterly as a GRO-B supporting mothers with breastfeeding. My background is in childcare.
4. I intend to speak about my mother, GRO-B: M who was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) following three blood transfusions received between 1968 and 1978. I do not know from which of these transfusions she contracted HCV.
5. In particular, I intend to discuss how the virus has affected and continues to affect her health in the forty years, which have followed, and moreover, the impact this has had on our family and our lives together.
6. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. I can confirm that my family and I wish to seek anonymity.
7. The Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and I understand that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
8. I wish to acknowledge that I was very young when my mother was transfused and as a result I do not recollect the circumstances surrounding her receipt of blood. My statement will primarily concern the impact of my mother's infection on the lives of my family and I, particularly as I was growing up.

Section 2. How Affected

9. I was born in GRO-B in 1968. I am the youngest of three. My sister GRO-B GRO-B is the oldest, aged 58 and brother GRO-B GRO-B is 54.

10. My mum tells me that after my birth, she was advised not to have any more children. She underwent a sterilisation. I know that she then had a hysterectomy some years after and that during these procedures she was provided with a number of blood transfusions. I am not aware of the precise dates.
11. I am 53 years old and for as long as I can remember, my mother has been unwell. She has been in and out of hospital with a number of different illnesses. At one point, she was admitted to Glasgow Royal for a lumbar puncture. I'm ashamed to say it but it reached the point where I thought she was just being a hypochondriac. I will discuss this in more detail within the section on 'Impact'.
12. In around 2017, either my mother or GRO-B told me about my mother's diagnosis with HCV. Because of GRO-B nursing background, she tends to take charge of medical related issues. My mother was with GRO-B during an appointment with the home doctor. Her diagnosis was relayed to her in a 'fly away' way comment. The doctor told her quite casually that HCV had been recorded in her medical notes. She had liver function tests quite often, but no one ever discussed the results with her.
13. As far as I am aware, my mother was never provided with an official diagnosis or explanation for her infection with HCV. She was put in touch with the 'Hep C Trust' who were able to provide her with more information.
14. I think I was frightened and worried when I learnt of my mother's diagnosis. Working in the NHS, I was vaccinated against Hepatitis B. I knew about this and HIV. However, I didn't know much about HCV. I was worried that it could be passed on and that my mother could have inadvertently infected her grandchildren. I think I am fine as I was a blood donor. I got my 50 units in before I was diagnosed with diabetes. If anything was discovered I'm sure I would have been told.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. As far as I am aware, my mother did not contract any infections other than HCV as a result of receiving contaminated blood.

Section 4. Consent

16. Not relevant to my statement.

Section 5. Impact

17. Generally, my siblings and I had a loving and happy childhood.

However, because I'm the youngest, my only memory is of my mum not being particularly well. She was often in and out of hospital for a whole host of problems. I can remember that as children, we had a lot of help and input from my grandparents, particularly my dad's mum,

GRO-B She didn't work and had more time to help out.

18. I can remember my mother being in and out of hospital for one procedure after the other. I can't remember them all. At one stage, she was diagnosed with ME. This followed a period of time where it felt like she was in bed for a matter of years. I now feel guilty; because I couldn't physically see what was wrong with her, I began to doubt if there was anything really wrong. I'm ashamed to say it but for quite a lot of my life, I thought my mother was a hypochondriac. Even saying this out loud now makes me feel deeply ashamed and its very upsetting to me.

19. It sounds horrific, but it reached the stage where I would roll my eyes when the phone rang. I have rarely if ever received a call to say that she is feeling well. Every time we would speak, it would be backed up with an ailment. I can often hear her breathlessness on the phone. In 53 years, I have never heard her say 'I'm feeling great' which has been

very upsetting for me. I really only want to hear her say, just once, "I'm fine" That has never happened, nor I doubt ever will.

20. As a result of my mother's illnesses, she was always being prescribed different medications. I have memories of her hallucinating that there were rats and mice crawling all over the bed from some of the medications. When my brother was at school, it was his turn to take the hamster home. When it escaped, my mum experienced an awful lot of trauma. Witnessing this was devastating. Fortunately, we found it under the piano still alive.

21. My parents had old fashioned principles. To the best of my recollection, I don't remember GRO-B my brother being asked to stay at home. Whereas, I missed a lot of school because I would be asked by my father to stay home to look after my mother. I don't blame him because I knew that this needed to be done. I know that GRO-B often missed school to take care of mum. When GRO-B and GRO-B were approaching their exams, I would stay at home instead. I only left school with two standard "O" grades, after resitting them. Yet I loved school. The only time I was off was to take care of my mother.

22. I can remember periods of time where my mum would be bedbound. My grandmother, my dad's mum would be at the house helping. There was a big fireplace my dad had built which my mum never liked. My gran, who was in her seventies at the time, was very fit for her age. She came over to demolish the fireplace. She also did the painting and decorating for us.

23. When my first child was born, my mother wanted to help with her childcare. She did her very best. However, on a number of occasions, either my mum or dad would phone in the morning to say that Mum couldn't help, as she was too unwell. My husband and I were juggling work and childcare. I'm not criticising her but I couldn't rely on her as far as supporting me in this regard.

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24. My gran, who was only twenty years older than my mum, took on a lot of childcare as a result. I feel for my mum and also for my children that my grandmother ended up doing more for them than their own grandmother. My mother adores my children and wanted to look after them but she didn't have the energy.

25. Apart from a memory of my mother going to Spain with my father on holiday, I have no real memory of her being well. We also had lovely Christmases and birthdays but I think she always put on a good front on family occasions for our sake. Behind closed doors she suffered. My dad probably witnessed this more than anyone. I've inherited this too. Even if I'm not feeling well, I put on a front so that my children won't notice.

26. My mother's career opportunities were affected by her illnesses over the years. Whilst she worked for periods of time, from 1987 she didn't work full-time. For years when we were younger, my father did two jobs. He was a lecturer in a college whilst working part time in a dental college. Whether this was through financial necessity because my mother was unable to work, I do not know. He spent the weekends playing golf. In retrospect, I think he might have wanted some respite from the pressures of taking care of my mother.

27. I think my father has struggled with my mother's illnesses over the years. Of course, he loves my mother but he is also from a generation loyal to the maxim, 'in sickness and in health'. He is now 88. Yet he doesn't look his age. He has always been very fit until a period of sepsis last year following which he had a pacemaker fitted. He comes from good stock. He still has an aunt who is still alive. His mother was 98 when she died.

28. My mother got into financial difficulty on a regular basis which I believe was the result of being unable to work. I remember that we had the most lavish birthdays and Christmases. They would buy us TVs and

HiFi's which were very expensive forty years ago. If she got into any debt it would have been as a result of these celebrations.

29. As a teenager, I had to hide the mail from my dad. My mum would get bills from different credit card companies. He didn't know she even had extra credit cards so I had to keep this a secret. When she had her first heart attack a few years ago, we children had to look into her finances and to whom she owed money. My parents do not have financial issues anymore because her mother left them money.
30. I now wonder if she got into debt because she didn't feel well and wanted to indulge us in material things. I also think she might have been compensating us children with possessions because she wasn't always able to take care of us. I imagine this led her to feel very guilty. I know that in the last year, I've been quite depressed. I think I gave up work at the wrong time. This led me to spend a fortune online. I was buying stuff because I didn't feel well.
31. For many years, I was exasperated by my mother's ill health which has had a knock-on effect through the generations. Whilst I now know that the HCV was the likely cause of her poor health, it has been difficult to shirk the feeling that she is somehow a hypochondriac. I have even subconsciously passed this feeling onto my daughters. Now and again, I hear my daughter say, 'my gran was at it again with her breathing'. I think, she wasn't 'at it', she is breathless which isn't her fault.
32. In recent years, my mother can no longer play golf because she doesn't have the eyesight nor the energy. Three years ago, my husband and daughters took my parents to a 9-hole course. There was a buggy she could sit on when she got tired. They had to line the ball up because of her eyesight. She can't play as she used to but she enjoyed being out in the fresh air. They want to do that again.
33. I burst into tears when GRO-B explained all the illnesses that could have been attributable to my mother's HCV which remained undiagnosed for

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decades. When she contacted the Hep C Trust, she was questioned about my mother's health. She ringed off almost all of mum's conditions.

34. I felt really guilty because for all these years I've felt exasperated whenever my mother has another illness and yet it was probably the result of the HCV, which she contracted through no fault of her own. Whenever I learnt that she was unwell again, I couldn't help but feel, 'here we go again, what now?' I continue to struggle with the guilt of doubting her and not always feeling sympathetic.
35. That feeling of doubt is not leaving me easily. GRO-B and I have a couple of lodges up north. I thought of taking my mum with me for a holiday. However, I instinctively thought of saying to her that she would have to be well if she wanted to join us. I now reproach myself for this, as I know that it isn't her fault that she has been in poor health. I really do need to ensure she is well, as there is no medical infrastructure nearby, the area is very isolated.
36. I am particularly close to my mum since I stopped working. Throughout the lockdown, I was at their door handing them their shopping. I broke my ankle in two places in January 2021. My dad came to my door, nearly crying because he hadn't seen me for a while and missed me. That really took its toll on him. I had to divvy up the responsibilities between my brother and sister.
37. My mother has been ill for the vast majority of my life and the entirety of her grandchildren's lives. She's not been physically or mentally able to support me. I'm not blaming her for this but now that I am a grandmother, I can see that I can help my daughter in ways that my mother was unable to owing to her poor health. If she hadn't been given contaminated blood, she might have been more capable. The joy I get from being able to support and help my children has been stolen from my mother. I believe this affects her to this day.

38. I've never had a conversation with my mum about her feelings with regards to the impact of her illnesses on her family. I think she would have hated being unwell and unable to take care of us. Perhaps, she thought she could have compensated by looking after her grandchildren but her prevailing health problems have prevented this. She can hardly hold her great grandchildren on her lap. She finds it too difficult.

39. I haven't said any of this to my mum and dad because I love my parents and it would hurt them too much to know the impact that my mother's illness has had on me.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

40. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support as a result of my mother's infection with HCV. I don't think any of us have. It was a 'flash in the pan' type comment that the doctor made when she mentioned that my mother had had HCV at some point in the past. As I have earlier iterated, she was never provided with an official diagnosis or explanation.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

41. Not relevant to my statement.

Section 8. Other Issues

42. Ultimately, I don't believe anyone knowingly infected people. I imagine it wouldn't happen nowadays as blood is tested. However, I would like some form of apology or a written statement to the effect that my mother contracted HCV, the source of which was most likely contaminated blood. Her diagnosis was provided to her as a fly away comment. No one got in touch with her to explain the circumstances

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surrounding her infection including when and how she contracted the virus. I feel as if people should be looking at patients' records and investigating how this happened. This seems to be a massive void in the health system in this regard.

43. I think everybody who has been infected should be compensated. Such individuals have not been able to live the lives of you and I. Through no fault of their own, they have missed out on the lives of their children, grandchildren and even great grandchildren because their health was compromised.

44. I just think what a shame it is to consider all that some people have missed out on in life. At the very least, I just want someone to apologise for what people have endured, including the knock-on effects that receiving contaminated blood has had on the families of all those infected.

45. I can also confirm that I was present when Mr. GRO-B read over my mother's statement to her and that I also read my mother's statement prior to her signing.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B _____

Dated

22.5.2021