

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No.: WITN1940001

Exhibits: WITN1940002 –021

Dated: 19th April 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B**

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B** My date of birth is **GRO-B** 1966. My address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I am making this statement in relation to my late father **GRO-B: F** My Dad was a protective husband and father and a proud man. He served in World War II. He was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of being given contaminated blood products as part of a plasma transfusion in 1991. My Dad never received proper compensation for what happened to him and no one has ever been held accountable. My Mum is 88 years old and suffers from dementia, she was never able to find out who was responsible for what happened to my Dad and she is now in a care home. We are still waiting for justice.

Section 2. How Affected

3. My Dad was born on **GRO-B** 1925 and he passed away on **GRO-B** 2005 aged 79. I was 38 when my Dad sadly passed away. His death certificate states he passed away due to a stroke, arteriosclerosis, and lung cancer (**WITN1940002**).
4. Due to my Dad's protective nature, he kept much of the details surrounding his Hepatitis C infection to himself. He chose not to tell us much about his

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health which has hindered my ability to write this statement with full details. He did however make some notes as he was going through his infection. With the help of my solicitors, I have used my Dad's medical records and his personal notes to assist me in preparing this statement.

5. My Dad never spoke in much detail about how he came to be infected with Hepatitis C or how and when he was told about his infection. Prior to contracting Hepatitis C my Dad had various health issues including peripheral vascular disease which **GRO-B** **GRO-B** 1994. He also had a hemicolectomy in 1984 and required a blood transfusion during this operation (**WITN1940003**). He was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2003.
6. Fortunately, my Dad asked Professor Bassendine about his Hepatitis C infection and how he contracted it. I understand from Professor Bassendine's written response dated 3 August 2001 (**WITN1940004**) that my Dad was given contaminated fresh frozen plasma on **GRO-B** 1991 due to a serious bleed in his groin following an operation to redirect blood flow to his feet.
7. I also note that there is a document within my Dad's medical records which refers to this operation as being uneventful which is strange considering he had to have a transfusion following it (**WITN1940005**).
8. Professor Bassendine also noted in her letter that the test to screen blood donations for Hepatitis C was available in March 1990, but it was not used by the Blood Transfusion Service until late 1991. I do not understand why they were unable to screen the blood my Dad received when the test was available at the time. It would have prevented my dad from being infected.

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9. The letter from Professor Bassendine indicates that my Dad was tested for Hepatitis C as part of a national 'lookback' study and Professor Bassendine was informed he was Hepatitis C antibody positive in 1995. Professor Bassendine states she tested my Dad in 1996, 1997 and 1998 – these tests continued to show he had Hepatitis C (**WITN1940006**).
10. My solicitors were able to find various lab reports showing the unit numbers of the blood products given to my Dad on **GRO-B** 1991. I also understand from my Dad's medical records he was given further plasma reduced blood and cryoprecipitate on 1st February, 2nd February, 19th February, 23rd March, 7th June and 14th June (**WITN1940007**).
11. Even though my Dad asked Dr Bassendine in 2001 about contaminated blood and his infection, he had kept notes when he was unwell and at around the time of diagnosis. He kept it all to himself even when he knew he was very ill but he wrote a lot down. He wrote a note listing important dates and I understand from this he was told by Dr **GRO-B** at **GRO-B** **GRO-B** on 10 October 1995 that he had contracted Hepatitis C (**WITN1940008**). Within his medical records was a lookback letter, unfortunately undated, explaining to Dr Chamberlain, his surgeon for the 1991 operation, that Dad should be tested for Hepatitis C (**WITN1940009**). Due to the letter being undated, it is difficult to tell when doctors first knew he had Hepatitis C.
12. I think he received a letter to visit the hospital however I am not entirely sure. I'm not sure about the moment he was actually told or what it was like as he didn't talk about much of it. I don't know what information my Dad was told about his infection or if side-effects and the long-term outcome were explained to him.

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13. A referral letter from GP Dr **GRO-B** to a consultant dermatologist Dr Lawrence dated 4 January 2001 (**WITN1940010**) states when my Dad saw Professor Bassendine and was tested in 1996, he had positive antibodies. The letter states his liver function was normal and he did not receive a liver biopsy due to his other health problems. I understand he continued to be followed up by Professor Bassendine, but the letter does not appear to show any concern at this point for my Dad's Hepatitis C infection.
14. My Dad shouldn't have contracted Hepatitis C through contaminated blood. It wasn't like he received a blood transfusion in the 70s when there was no screening of blood. In 1990 there were tests for Hepatitis C. The infection should never have happened, it was a terrible thing. He should have been told as soon as they found out, but he didn't find out until 1995, 4 years after he was given contaminated blood.
15. I feel like the doctors didn't tell him as soon as they should have as they were just trying to sweep it under the carpet. In the end I think they only told people because so many people had become infected through contaminated blood.
16. Dad's biggest worry was always that he had HIV or that he would pass on HIV or Hepatitis C to me or Mum. At the time HIV was mainly associated with homosexuals so my Dad's major worry was about the stigma surrounding HIV. I think he worried about how it looked, being married to Mum, and possibly having HIV.
17. He worried about passing it on to me or Mum through sharing cutlery or by using the same shower. I was tested for Hepatitis C on 4th October 2019 and it came back negative. At the time of my Dad's infection we didn't know whether we could get it too, it was a stressful time as the unknown of it all was scary.

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18. I am unsure if my Mum was tested for Hepatitis C and due to her dementia, she would not remember now.

Section 3. Other Infections

19. As far as I am aware my Dad did not have any other infections.

20. My Dad's medical records suggest he may have been tested for HIV and Hepatitis B in February 1991 (**WITN1940011**). However, the notes aren't entirely clear if this test was carried out and there does appear to be any results within his records. My Dad never spoke about Hepatitis B. His medical records suggest he may have been further tested for Hepatitis B in 1996 (**WITN1940012**). Again, there does not appear to be a clear outcome of this test for Hepatitis B.

21. There does not appear to be any later mentions in his records of Hepatitis B or HIV.

Section 4. Consent

22. I'm not sure if my Dad consented to the plasma transfusion. I can't imagine if someone was given adequate information surrounding the risks of infection that they would consent. I would imagine if he required a plasma transfusion in an emergency following an operation, they would have just given it to him. I think if my Dad was asked whether he consented to a transfusion, he would have said no. I understand from his medical records he signed a consent form dated 28 January 1991 (**WITN194013**). I understand this was him consenting to the operation and any additional measures required. It is unclear whether the risk of possibly receiving blood products was explained to him and if he consented to this

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particularly. The possibility that he might require a transfusion of blood or blood products is not listed on the form.

23. As far as I am aware, he was not tested for the purposes of research.

24. I understand from a letter within my Dad's medical records that he was entered into the HCV National Register on 10 November 1998 **(WITN1940014)**. I do not know whether my Dad consented to this or not.

Section 5. Impact

25. My Dad's biggest concern was about passing his infection on to mum or I. Due to the number of tablets he was on, he would often have bleeds. His first thought would always be to ensure my Mum was wearing gloves. His first concern was always our safety. That's the kind of man he was.

26. After I found out about my Dad's infection, I found it very stressful. I didn't want to stop seeing Mum and Dad, but I was constantly worrying about whether I could get Hepatitis C through sharing cutlery in their house. I felt so guilty and stressed about the idea of not going to see them, so I just had to take a chance and go along to their house but being careful whilst doing so. I didn't know how the virus was transmitted so I didn't know how to protect myself. It impacted my relationship with my Dad, he could see how worried I was about coming to the house. If he had a nosebleed or something like that, he could tell how careful I was being.

27. One of the scariest parts of my Dad's Hepatitis C infection was the unknown. It was scary not knowing what was going to happen to him next

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and how ill he was going to get. The not knowing is a real killer – I still find it scary with my Mum going into a care home and the unknown of that too.

28. Dad stopped going out as much as he used to because he could no longer drink. He became really careful about where he was eating because he was concerned the virus could be passed through cutlery. Once he found out it couldn't be passed on through cutlery, he did go out a bit more. His infection completely invaded his daily life – he couldn't have a normal social life anymore and this just added another horrible thing on top of everything else. Dad's independence was compromised because of it.

29. It ruined his life – he and my Mum had worked hard all their life and hadn't stopped working. They never got a chance to enjoy life after he finished working because of his illness. If I had not been able to take them to and from town, they wouldn't have had any life at all. I did that for them for years. If I hadn't been living near home, then they would never have got out of the house. Now my Mum is stuck in a care home and can't even enjoy life.

30. My Dad faced a lot of stigma because of his hepatitis C. I think the stigma came from the fact that so little was known about Hepatitis C. It was the unknown of it all that was the worst part, and still is. It has only really been in the last 20 years that awareness has improved around Hepatitis C due to campaigning.

31. Mum's life was also badly affected. She had to take on more responsibility and lost time for herself. There were so many hospital visits she attended, and I think she could have done without the strain of half these visits. She was already going through it as it was. I would drive Mum and Dad to his hospital appointments, I was lucky, GRO-B and I started early and finished early so could drive them to appointments. I never went

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into the appointments though. Mum got upset sometimes and would ask Dad how he got Hepatitis C – I had to explain to her it wasn't his fault, that he got it from a blood product.

32. My Dad didn't want anybody else to know – the only people that knew were me and Mum. I had to explain to my wife at the time – fortunately she was very understanding. We had no kids so that made it easier. Being an only child meant I had to deal with it all. Other than my parents and my wife I had little support. Now that my Mum has dementia, I feel like I am the only person left to deal with the pain of what has happened as she probably does not remember.

33. Dad was a proud man. When I was growing up, every Friday he would constantly get Mum to clean the steps outside our house, so it looked nice. It's the way he brought me up. Dad was too proud for people to know about the hepatitis C. He tried to act like everything was normal – even when he became very ill he would have his hair done still and he shaved every day. He still wore a shirt and tie. I think he didn't tell those close to him because he was afraid of the stigma attached to Hepatitis C – I think it's especially older people, those from his generation and before, that attach this stigma to Hepatitis C.

34. Some health conditions cannot be prevented, but my Dad's Hepatitis C infection could have been, and should have been, prevented. There were tests available at the time that he was given contaminated blood. Dad expressed frustration at this. He used to smoke but once he found out how dangerous smoking was he stopped because he wanted to prevent this damage to his health.

35. It is hard for me to comment on the physical impact that my Dad's Hepatitis C infection had on him as I don't know whether these symptoms were part

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of his other health problems. I do know that he experienced abdominal pain and high blood pressure which are symptoms related to Hepatitis C. He was always tired, and he had to really fight to get on with his daily life. He couldn't do normal things anymore – he used to love to do his crosswords, but he lost the ability even to concentrate on them.

36. I do not recall anything about Dad being offered treatment or receiving treatment however as can be seen from a letter to his GP Dr **GRO-B** dated 2 April 2003 (**WITN1940015**), he opted not to undertake treatment. I imagine if he was told the treatment was going to be brutal and may have limited success, he would have said no.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

37. I do not know what my Dad's experience of support and treatment was like as he never spoke about it. He deserved more help to work through all the information he was being given and to be provided support when it came to his mental health.

38. Dad's infection has caused me so much stress. Fortunately, I received an email from EIBSS telling me I could get counselling. I have found it really helpful, especially since I have been the only one dealing with my Mum's dementia. It was very hard, I've suffered too. Dad's infection has impacted me massively. It does help if they can provide counselling as support. My Mum wasn't offered counselling, but it would have helped her too.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

39. I think my Dad put in the groundwork by ensuring his diagnosis was in writing from Professor Bassendine. He told Professor Bassendine he

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wanted a letter in writing which stated he had Hepatitis C – this was the letter exhibited earlier in my statement **(WITN1940004)**.

40. My Dad received a stage 1 payment from the Skipton fund in 2004. We also received a Stage 2 payment of £25,000 **(WITN1940016)**, this was in November 2005 after he passed away. I believe my Dad had liver cirrhosis, so I imagine this was why he was eligible for the Stage 2 payment. I think his cirrhosis was difficult to prove as due to his other health problems he was unable to undergo a liver biopsy. I do not know if cirrhosis was ever proven.
41. When my Dad passed away my Mum applied for the bereavement payment however her application was rejected in 2020. The Skipton Fund told my Mum that because Hepatitis C was not written on my Dad's death certificate, she would have to provide further evidence from a clinician stating it contributed to his death **(WITN1940017)**. A letter from my Dad's GP was sent as evidence to EIBSS, the GP stated they could neither confirm nor refute that Hepatitis C was linked to my Dad's death. **(WITN1940018)**. I find it arbitrary that we were able to get the Stage 2 payment, but my Mum was unable to get the bereavement payment following my Dad's death.
42. Hepatitis C should have been on my Dad's death certificate as it contributed to his death **(WITN1940002)**. After carrying out some research online I found out that when Hepatitis C damages your liver it can clog the arteries and can lead to a stroke. A stroke was named on his death certificate as a contributing cause of his death. I strongly believe the hepatitis C contributed to his death too, I cannot see how it could not have done.

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43. I recently appealed this decision on behalf of my Mum but EIBSS rejected the appeal again due to the same reasoning.
44. We only found out about financial assistance through my Dad. I do not know how my Dad became aware of financial assistance. He left my Mum a note explaining it all. If he had not left a note, we would not have known anything about it.
45. My Mum received a £519 winter fuel payment from EIBSS in 2018 (WITN1940020). However, this has stopped since she is in a care home now. My Mum received £167 monthly from EIBSS until April 2020 (WITN1940021). She now receives monthly payments of £1792 from EIBSS. We are grateful for the money, it's useful.
46. I don't think the payments are sufficient to reflect the group of people that have been affected by this tragedy. I've been affected as much as my Mum, but I don't get anything.

Section 8. Other Issues

47. Trying to get any of my Dad's medical records from his GP, GRO-B was next to impossible. They continuously stated they couldn't allow us to access Dad's records due to patient confidentiality. My Mum couldn't request them as she had dementia – at the time I was the only person left to request the records and yet they still couldn't give them to me. Eventually we received a copy of his GP records. I was able to get my Dad's records from the Freeman Hospital, but I had to pay £95 for them.

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48. I hope the Inquiry will conclude that somebody from the government must be held accountable for this tragedy which affected my Dad and so many others.

49. People need to be compensated properly; people shouldn't have to fill in an arduous form every year whilst they are ill. The government know they have messed up – so why don't they give people the compensation they deserve so we can all move on as much as we can? They should provide compensation which goes on for the rest of your life, this is what people deserve.

50. I don't think anyone was told the truth. Hepatitis C should have been included on my Dad's death certificate, but it wasn't. I think the government haven't told the truth, they hoped it would get brushed under the carpet. I believe that it is only because everyone affected and infected are so angry about it that they've even come out and admitted that they used contaminated blood. It has taken 30 years and even now they haven't admitted it was their fault.

51. My Mum and Dad were robbed of their retirement. Dad's infection affected all our lives. It was just a further burden on all of us that we did not deserve. I just want this all to end – the pain of not knowing what will happen next. I want to be able to move on in some way. I hope that when the government provides compensation that will be it. I've spent so much time thinking about what has happened to my Dad – I just want some sort of closure.

Statement of Truth

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

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Signed

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