

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name **GRO-B**

Statement No.: WITN3569001

Exhibits: **WITN3569002 - 003**

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 20 August 2019.

GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B** My date of birth is **GRO-B** 1953 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I was born in Birmingham but I now live with my aunt and uncle in Devon. Over the years we have run several pubs across the country.
2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV") following a blood transfusion for bacterial endocarditis. This occurred in either 1979 or 1980 at Sandwell General Hospital ("SGH") in Birmingham. In particular, I intend to speak about the nature of my illness, how it affected me, the treatment I received, and the impact it has had on my life.

3. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

Section 2. How Infected

4. When I was young, I met a boy called GRO-B who became my boyfriend. He introduced me to drugs and we used to take them together, sometimes intravenously. I do not blame anyone except myself. On my birthday in either 1979 or 1980 I came home to find my boyfriend of 8 years dead. It was awful and it will stay with me for the rest of my life. Following this incident, I became determined to give up drugs. By 1982 I was clean of them entirely.
5. However, following my boyfriend's death, I became very ill. A month or so later I was admitted to SGH with Septicaemia. I remained in hospital for 2 or 3 months under the care of Dr GRO-B. In that time I was given a blood transfusion. I believe I was given two units of blood. I remember lying in bed and seeing two bags of blood I recall this transfusion was over a weekend.
6. I remember the Monday after I received the blood transfusion, the consultant came around to see me. He stood at the end of my bed with his team and looked shocked that I had been given a transfusion. It appeared to me he was annoyed. It seemed a very odd reaction to me and it has always stuck in my mind. I remember Dr GRO-B was an abrupt man. I had no idea about contaminated blood at the time and was never warned that it was a possibility.
7. Following my stay in hospital, I experienced a lot of tiredness which gradually got worse. I was young at the time and should not have been feeling like that. I could not understand why I felt that way. I went to the

doctor and they did various blood tests but could not find anything wrong.

8. In 1989 I had a check-up with BUPA. The tests they did showed that I had some liver impairment, and they suggested I went to see my GP about it. I was living in Devon at the time. My GP told me there was nothing to worry about. He said the blood tests BUPA had done were useless and a waste of money. I was completely dismissed by my GP. I trusted him to know if there was any problem with my liver, and he did not think there was.
9. It was not until 2001, when I went to see my GP in Birmingham for something unrelated, that I discovered I had HCV. I discovered this as 'HEPATITIS C' was clearly written in large, bold letters, across the top of my medical file. I was completely taken aback, I was so shocked and upset. I knew it was an infection that could kill you and that it could cause cirrhosis of the liver. I believe they must have known of my condition for 10 years and had not told me. I believe they should have told me as soon as they knew, in a much more sensitive manner. It was pure luck that I found out at all. If I had not seen my medical file that day I might not be sitting here right now.
10. I asked the GP, Dr [GRO-B] why it said that and she was shocked that I did not know about my HCV status. She apologised that nobody had ever told me and then immediately asked if I wanted to be referred to a liver specialist. I told her that I did. I also questioned Dr [GRO-B] more about my HCV and how long I had had it, but she was unable to answer these questions. The next time I went to the GP I saw they had given my medical notes a new cover, and they denied that 'HEPATITIS C' had ever been written across it.
11. At that time, I was not given any information about managing my infection or about the risk of infecting others.

12. Within the month I was referred to the liver specialist, Dr **GRO-B** at Queen Elizabeth Hospital ("QEH") in Birmingham. I attach the referral letter which confirms my HCV diagnosis as **WITN3569002**. I was then put on a course of treatment which lasted for six months.

Section 3. Other Infections

13. To the best of my knowledge I did not receive any infection other than HCV as a result of being given infected blood.

Section 4. Consent

14. To the best of my knowledge, I have never been treated or tested without my knowledge or consent. I do not believe I have ever been treated or tested for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

15. When I found out about my HCV my life was in turmoil. I went to see the liver specialist at QEH and I was offered Interferon and Ribavirin treatment. I took the treatment for 6 months and it was an extremely gruelling period of my life.

16. Whilst undergoing the treatment I went into hospital for regular blood tests and they kept track of all the levels in my blood. I felt low, depressed, and sick and lost my appetite. Usually I was full of energy but I became completely exhausted. They used to give me the drugs and send me home with them. After a few hours of taking them all the side-effects would hit me. I felt like a pin cushion by the end of

treatment. My aunt and uncle were there for me, supporting me through everything.

17. Following successful treatment, I was discharged from QEH in 2007. I attach the letter discharging me and confirming that I was HCV free as **WITN3569003**.

18. I was told at the end of my treatment that there is some scarring on my liver. As for other after-effects, I get migraines now and I never used to, and I still get very tired today. I cannot be sure if this is a result of my HCV or the treatment, but it is a part of my life now when it never was before. I also have a shrinking jaw bone which means I am losing my teeth.

19. There was a time in my life, whilst I was infected with HCV that I went into hospital with a lot of abscesses all over my body. They kept appearing around my hips. The hospital had to drain them. They could not explain why I kept getting them, and I was then unaware of my HCV status. These abscesses have not reoccurred since my HCV was treated.

20. After I was cured, I went to the dentist to have my teeth looked at, and I remember being asked by the dentist whether I had HCV. At the time said no. I subsequently asked my GP if I should have told the dentist about my HCV. She said I did not have to ever tell the dentist as they wore gloves when they looked at people's teeth. I always remembered this and am still unsure whether that was the correct advice.

21. My HCV status was not something I wanted to broadcast to other people. I did tell my aunt and uncle and they were incredibly supportive. I eventually told my parents but I do not think they really understood what it was or what it meant. Through it all, I kept a lot of things to myself. It became a burden, a big part of my life. It is something I have to live with.

22. I feel as though I have been put in a box by other people because of my previous drug history. A lot of the time I feel like some sort of low life. I feel I am looked down on by those in the medical profession.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

23. The combination of my history of drug use and my HCV infection has made getting medical support very difficult in my life. Medical staff assume the HCV is due to the drug problem and refuse to link it to the blood transfusion. I believe this is in an attempt to avoid any responsibility and cover up what they have done.

24. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support in regard to my HCV status.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

25. I have never been offered any financial support from any of the schemes, nor did I ever apply. I never really felt I needed the help. My fear is they would avoid giving me any financial assistance due to my past drug use.

Section 8. Other Issues

26. I am certain I got the HCV from SGH when I was transfused with contaminated blood. I have tried to acquire my medical records from SGH but I was told they would have been destroyed after 8 years.

27. For at least 10 years I was infected with HCV as a result of contaminated blood, and yet I have no letter of acknowledgement from the government or NHS, no apology. They should be ashamed.

ANONYMOUS

28. All those poor innocent people, young and old, who have had bad blood. There has been so much misery and heartbreak. The authorities have so many deaths on their hands, and an awful lot to answer for. I cannot understand why they allowed blood from prisons and elsewhere to be given to ill people. I have suffered over many years but for other people there are no words for what they have been through. I hope we get justice after all these years.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____

GRO-B

Dated _____

18/10/2019.