

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B** **ANON**

Statement No: **WITN4866001**

Exhibits: **WITN4866002 - 004**

Dated: 4 March 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 12 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** 1959 and my address is **GRO-B** I am single and live on my own. I have two grown up children from two separate long-term relationships. My daughter is 34 and my son is 20.
2. I used to work in **GRO-B** but I retired approximately 6 years ago as a result of a degenerative spinal condition. I was diagnosed with osteoarthritis of the spine and I only have 2 vertebrae left. I currently rely on universal credit.

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3. I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus (HCV), which I believe I contracted as a result of being given a blood transfusion.
4. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment that I received and the impact it had on my life.
5. 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

6. In [GRO-B] 1962, not long before my third birthday I was involved in a road traffic accident on [GRO-B] – this was where I lived with my parents and my four brothers. I was the second youngest of the siblings. I was standing on the pavement with my older brother, who was holding my hand before I decided to run across the road. A car hit me and I flew high up in the air and as I was coming back down a second car hit me. According to my brother, blood was everywhere and even coming out of my ears – he thought I was dead. I have been told that people rushed out of the pub to help. Still to this day and as young as I was, I experience flashbacks of the accident and remember elements, but it was my brother who has explained most things to me, relating to it.
7. From what I understand, I was taken straight to the [GRO-B] Hospital on [GRO-B] Road. I cannot remember how long I was in hospital for. My brother and father came in to visit me and my brother distinctly remembers that I was given a blood transfusion. He recalls there being a bag of blood above my bed which fed into my arm.
8. I was discharged from hospital after a period of weeks I believe. A couple of days later I became really pale. I was lying on the settee motionless and my eyes were rolling. An ambulance was called out again and I underwent cranial surgery, which was successful.

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9. When I went to Guys Hospital for tests, I was told that I have a lot of scarring in my ears and that I would eventually lose my hearing. I have had hearing problems for years and have a hearing aid, which I use in places where there is a lot of noise, for instance social environments, with lots of people talking.
10. I lived in GRO-B until the age of 10 when we moved to GRO-B and at the age of 17, we moved again to GRO-B
11. Due to constant problems at home, I was sent to boarding school and as a result of an incident that happened at school when I was 15, I went to a detention centre for 2 months and 5 days for burglary, theft and arson. I was released at the age of 16, so I didn't go back to school and I took up an apprenticeship in GRO-B work after which I took GRO-B
12. In 1991 I was sent to HMP Pentonville for 12 months for affray, as a result of an incident involving a police officer. My time was reduced to 9 months and I was released as time served. I moved back into my flat in GRO-B where I have lived ever since.
13. To confirm I have never used intravenous drugs and I do not have any tattoos or piercings. I never got myself into any trouble whilst in prison and there were no incidents whereby I had blood contact with any individual.
14. In 2015 I went to the Heart and Lung Centre (just off GRO-B) for a complete health screen and check-up, prior to and with the intention of taking part in a trial, as a number of family members have suffered with heart disease. They ran a number of tests and took various blood samples. I did consent to a range of listed tests and knew that one of them would be for hepatitis.
15. I received a phone call from the centre the next day and was told that I had tested positive for HCV. I was in complete shock and did not think it was possible that I could have contracted the virus – I initially thought she had the wrong person. I had heard about hepatitis but I do not remember if I knew at the time how it affects the liver.

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16. I booked an appointment straight away with my GP, Dr. GRO-B at the GRO-B GRO-B Surgery in GRO-B. From what I remember, I said I could not believe that I had been infected and asked for a second opinion. I was referred to the Hepatology Department at Kings College Hospital for further tests and the diagnosis was later confirmed.
17. I racked my brains on how I could have got it. I knew it could not have been from my time in detention. I phoned my brother up and asked if there was anything specific that he remember from the road traffic accident. It was then when he reminded me of the bag of blood hung up by the side of my bed.
18. I was provided with information leaflets and was told how to manage the infection. I did not find this too hard because I live on my own.
19. I have found a page that was among some of my medical papers. It shows that in January 2011, I had a liver function test that was abnormal, so much so that it is written in larger type than the other entries and is in bold red as opposed to black. It states that the patient should be contacted. I do recall being told but chose not to go in because I felt ok. On the back of the page it states that my alcohol intake was 70 units per week. This may have been the cause of the abnormal liver test, or contributed to the abnormal reading. However, it may be because of my hepatitis C, that at the time had not been diagnosed. I do not believe that I was ever informed that it could be hepatitis, which I would have been carrying at that time. Had I been told this, I would have had it investigated. I exhibit the 2 sides of this page as **WITN4866004**.

Section 3. Other Infections

20. I have not contracted any infection other than HCV as a result of being given contaminated blood.
21. Dr Saddler, one of the consultants at Kings College Hospital asked me to have a test for HIV. My initial response was 'I am not gay' – at the time I believed HIV and

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HCV were associated with the gay community, but he confirmed that it was a precautionary measure. I consented to the test and the result was negative.

Section 4. Consent

22. I do not think that I have ever been treated or tested without consent. I presume my parents would have consented to my medical treatment after the road traffic accident.

Section 5. Impact

23. I was only diagnosed with HCV 6 years ago, so I lived in ignorance of the virus for over 50 years. I was successfully treated a year after the diagnosis, so the direct impact of HCV on my life is rather minimal apart from the initial shock of being diagnosed.
24. I cut back on my alcohol consumption once diagnosed with HCV, as I had been quite a heavy drinker beforehand.
25. I was put on an 8-week course of Harvoni treatment during the summer of 2016, apparently because I had a particularly high viral load. I understood that the medication was very expensive and someone told me it was £35,000. I took one tablet each day and I was told not to drink orange juice because the high acidity affected the medication.
26. Exhibit **WITN4866002**, a letter from Kings College Hospital states that my course of treatment was from 14 July 2016 until 28 September 2016 and states that by week 4 the virus was non-detectable. The document also explains that I have osteoarthritis of the spine and that I had cranial surgery as a result of a road traffic accident, however it incorrectly states that I was 5 years old at the time, instead of nearly 3.

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27. I went back to Kings a few times during the course of treatment for monitoring. Scans were taken of my liver and blood samples were taken at every appointment. At the end of the treatment, my viral load remained undetectable.
28. My liver is badly scarred and I believe this is due to my infection with HCV.
29. I used to get bad pain in my back as a child. Later in life I was diagnosed with osteoarthritis and initially put the pain down to that, but a degenerative disease would not have affected me as a child. The pain was so sharp that I used to feel like I was passing out. This started to disappear as I got older, but I have not experienced the pain since the Harvoni treatment.
30. I do suffer with depression and have done since I came out of the youth detention centre. I was physically abused and beaten whilst there and I also saw a lot of mistreatment by staff on inmates. I was in touch with a solicitor who was putting a case together against prison staff at the centres, but I have not heard anything for 18 months. I feel that my depression is very much connected to my time in the detention centre. I attempted to commit suicide in my early 20s, not long after I lost my father (he died in 1978). I fell apart and I could not get past all of the beatings and everything I witnessed during my detention. I took a lot of aspirin pills and was found unresponsive by a friend. I was taken to Kings College Hospital and everything was pumped out of my system. It was a cry for help – I did not have a great life growing up, my mum left my dad when I was very young and he brought us boys up on his own, which meant at times I was put into council care and foster homes.
31. I never told anyone, other than my brothers about my infection because of the stigma associated with the virus. I was worried about other people's perceptions of how I contracted the virus and this would have affected the way people viewed me. They may have brought my lifestyle into question and made false assumptions.
32. In the year that I knew about the HCV infection, before it was successfully treated, I was never refused any dental or medical treatment. I do not recall ever being treated differently than before.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

33. I do not recall being offered counselling in relation to my HCV infection, but I tend to keep myself to myself anyway so I probably would not have bothered.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. One of the nurses in the hepatology department told me about the Skipton Fund.
35. I applied in the summer of 2016, but my application was rejected on the basis that I had no supporting medical evidence to prove that I received a blood transfusion in 1962. I did include a letter written by my brother as a statement of what happened after the accident and it included him seeing the bag of blood with a tube going into my arm.
36. I appealed the initial decision and in November 2016 I received a letter from the appeal panel (exhibited as **WITN4866003**) stating that my file had been reviewed and there was no record of any blood transfusion during my cranial surgery. It incorrectly stated that I was 5 at the time of the accident, though they were probably misinformed. The letter explained that it was unusual that a blood transfusion would be necessary for that type of head injury or operation. The ultimate decision was that my infection was not as a result of NHS treatment. According to this letter, the panel consisted of an expert from each of the fields of liver disease, blood services, general medical practice and a legally qualified chair. There was no expert with regards to head injuries or cranial surgery on the panel, so I am not sure how they drew the conclusion that I could not have had significant blood loss immediately after the accident or during surgery.

Section 8. Other Issues

37. I do have copies of my medical records, but there are few notes in regard to my accident and cranial surgery. Much is in illegible handwriting.

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38. I would like the Inquiry to find out why individuals were given infected blood and to establish the truth.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 04/03/2021