

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name GRO-B
Statement No.: WITN5676001
Exhibits:
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

GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B I was born on GRO-B 1934 and details of my address are known to the Inquiry. I have six grown-up children. I am nearly 88 years old, and I am retired. I currently live in Bristol with my son and daughter GRO-B
2. My daughter GRO-B attended the witness interview with me and has also provided contributions from her perspective. She used to work as a care assistant but is no longer able to work due to health issues. She cares for me and my son.
3. I married my husband GRO-B: H in 1967. I intend to discuss H infection with Hepatitis C (HCV), which he contracted from a blood transfusion during surgery following a road traffic accident. He died as a result of complications arising from his HCV infection on GRO-B 2001.

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4. This witness statement has been provided without the benefit of access to H full medical records.
5. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. My family has not been involved in prior litigation.
6. I can also confirm that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
7. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories can fade. I have been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However I can only recall to the best of my ability, and these time frames should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates.

Section 2. How Affected

8. My husband H was born on GRO-B 1934 in Jamaica.
9. I was also born and brought up in Jamaica, and I met H there. We started a relationship together and we got married on GRO-B
10. In the mid-1960s, we decided to move to the UK for better employment opportunities.
11. H moved in around 1964 and he moved in with his sister. He got a job in a factory in the chemical industry. He specialised in cleaning industrial machinery including drums.
12. I stayed in Jamaica with my four children, following H to the UK a few years later.

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13. At first, we lived in [GRO-B] Birmingham. We went on to have two more daughters [GRO-B] who were both born in Birmingham.
14. We moved to Bristol in 1971, and [H] continued working in the chemical industry. We had a happy family life and we were involved with the community and our local church.
15. On [GRO-B] 1993, [H] was involved in a hit and run accident on our road in Bristol.
16. He was working on a car which was in a garage at the end of our street. At around midday, he wanted to go across the road to one of the small shops to get some lunch. As he was crossing the road, a car came out of nowhere and hit him.
17. He landed underneath a parked car and the car that had hit him drove off, leaving him for dead.
18. He didn't get help straight away. The person who had hit him drove off without getting help, and no one else saw the accident. Our road is a quiet, mostly residential street, so there probably wouldn't have been lots of people around when it happened. We therefore don't know how long he was left before an ambulance was called.
19. At some point after the accident, one of my friends from church, who was on her way to my house, saw a man's foot under a car. She immediately called an ambulance and other people in the street were alerted.
20. I was out when it happened, and so was the rest of the household. So I didn't know anything about it until I got home. Once my neighbours and people in my street realised what had happened, they started looking for me, but no one could find me.

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21. I had been out visiting some friends who were sick, and was told about the accident by one of my neighbours as soon as I got back. It came as a huge shock.
22. I went straight into the house and packed a bag, then went to the hospital to find out what was happening.
23. [H] had been taken to the Bristol Royal Infirmary, which we know as the BRI.
24. When [GRO-B] and I got to the hospital, he was in a horrible state. He could hardly speak, and had severe cuts and bruising to his face including black eyes.
25. I remember he was wearing an overall from working in the garage, and they had to cut his clothes off.
26. He was taken for x-rays and they discovered both of his legs were badly broken.
27. We were told he would need an operation on his legs in order to pin them.
28. [H] had lost a lot of blood in the accident, and the doctor told us they would be giving him some blood.
29. I remember seeing him being given the blood. I saw the drip going into his body. He came out of the theatre after his operation with the blood drips attached to him.
30. After about two weeks at the BRI, he was moved to Southmead Hospital, Bristol, for rehabilitation.

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31. During this time, I remember [H] saying he 'felt funny'. We put it down to the fact he was having to do the rehabilitation for his injured legs, which was very challenging for him, and so we didn't think anything more of it.
32. He did make a recovery from the accident, and was discharged home, though he was never able to work and had long-term issues with his mobility.
33. [H] didn't know who it was that had hit him in the hit and run accident. He hadn't seen who was driving as it happened so fast, and nobody ever came forward.
34. There was some talk that someone who was the friend of a friend knew who it was, but the person never gave us any names and the police didn't follow it up.
35. When the police investigated and asked us, we said we didn't know. I think the case ended up getting dropped due to lack of evidence.
36. Once [H] came home from the hospital, we did notice a change in him in respect of his ability to remember things and how he communicated with us, but we put all of it down to the fact that he had hit his head in the accident.
37. Sometime later, he also started vomiting blood. I sought medical attention as soon as I was aware of this, but there was little information or advice given to us.
38. [H] grew sicker and he died in hospital on [GRO-B] 2001.
39. We had been married for [GRO-B] years when he died. It was a very sad and distressing time for me.

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40. When he passed away, we were told he had liver damage and they suspected he had HCV. We were not aware of this before he was in the hospital dying.
41. Although we were unaware beforehand, in hindsight, the HCV had undoubtedly led to his death.
42. He did not take drugs and was never involved in intravenous drug use. He had no tattoos or piercings. He never visited prostitutes and he was not promiscuous. I do not know of any other way [H] could have been infected apart from the transfusion.

Section 3. Other Infections

43. [H] was not infected with anything else that we are aware of.
44. However, even when we asked they wouldn't speak to us without his consent.

Section 4. Consent

45. I recall being told he would be being given a blood transfusion. However I do not remember providing consent for it, however it is possible [H] gave consent himself before the operation.
46. I do not believe we were ever told that there was any risk involved with the blood.

Section 5. Impact

47. The accident itself had a significant impact on [H] in that he was never able to walk properly again after. He couldn't do things like go out for walks anymore which he previously enjoyed.

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48. He did have crutches, but found using them very difficult, so he couldn't go very far with them.
49. He was never able to go back to work after the accident.
50. For a long time after his accident, he mostly stayed in the house, which meant his quality of life was severely impacted. He would get frustrated as he couldn't do much.
51. In around 1995 he was given a mobility scooter by the health authority. This helped him to get around and he was a lot happier as a result of regaining some independence and freedom.
52. He would go all over the place on that scooter. Once he used his scooter to go somewhere on the other side of Bristol and he ended up getting towed back to the house by the AA as he had broken down.
53. Sometime after the transfusion, he did appear to experience what might be described as brain fog. He would often say he couldn't remember things when we were talking to him. He also seemed to find concentrating on tasks difficult. This was not something that happened before the blood transfusion..
54. He had hit his head in the accident, so we attributed his inability to concentrate and difficulties remembering things to that.
55. [H] was never a big talker, especially about pain or health concerns. He was a man of a few words. He learnt not to tell people things, and when questions were asked, he often felt like people were prying.
56. He was a man that really didn't talk much about anything. He would rather keep things to himself.

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57. He would always just say 'I'm fine'. So we wouldn't always know if he was in pain or not.
58. When he was a child in Jamaica he had contracted polio, and this led to a problem with his speech. He would have to talk slowly and take his time for people to understand him. A lifetime of having to repeat himself whenever people couldn't understand him also led to his reluctance to talk.
59. Not long before he died, I remember returning home from visiting a friend, and looking at the bucket GRO-B used to use as a toilet in his room. It was full of blood. He had vomited so much blood it had filled the bucket.
60. I immediately called the doctor and she came to see H I wasn't told anything about what was wrong with him at that time.
61. When he was in the hospital before he died, we were told he had advanced liver damage, but the doctors wouldn't give us any more information without his consent. We had been asking doctors at the hospital and our GPs, but no one would say anything to us.
62. We only properly learnt about the HCV after he died. On the very day he died, a doctor I didn't know at the BRI asked me if I knew what my husband died of. I said 'no'. He then started to tell me some information, but in my emotional state, I wasn't able to take it in.
63. I was frustrated no one told me anything when he was alive, and then when they started talking to me as soon as he died, I couldn't even think about what they were saying properly.
64. I regret that I didn't pay more attention when the doctor was talking to me after he died, but he was dead and I was very upset. I couldn't take it all in.

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65. In terms of stigma, we weren't aware of the HCV and as far as we are aware, [H] didn't know himself either.

66. Similarly, there wasn't a financial impact as it was because of the accident that [H] was unable to go back to work, not the HCV.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

67. [H] was never offered any treatment for HCV. We were not even aware he had it until it was too late to do anything about it. I do not know if [GRO-B] was aware he had HCV, but he certainly did not mention anything about it.

68. Towards the end of his life, when he was very unwell, we tried to find out more about his condition. We asked his GP surgery, which our family had been registered with for many years. This was [GRO-B]
[GRO-B]

69. The doctors always wanted to focus on his speech problem, over and above anything else. We felt that his speech was good enough to understand him and we were more worried about other things.

70. Once he was in hospital we also kept asking there. Again, it was difficult to get anyone to tell us anything.

71. [GRO-B] asked one of the doctors if they could confirm what condition [H] was dying of. The doctor said something about him having liver damage and that they thought he had HCV. We didn't know anything about it prior to this.

72. [GRO-B] remembers the doctor asking if [H] had been in any accidents, which of course he had, so we told him about that and his transfusion in 1993.

73. He wouldn't give us any more details. He was clearly being very careful about what he said.

74. I have a feeling the GPs knew about [H] HCV but they wouldn't say anything to us. We had been asking and asking, but no one would tell us anything. This was very frustrating for us as we just wanted to be able to take better care of [H]

75. I felt so down about the fact that they had left us in the dark. We wanted to know years before. Finding out at the very end meant we weren't able to do anything to help him.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

76. To date, we have never made an application for financial assistance, however this is something we are interested in pursuing, provided we are able to obtain the necessary evidence.

77. We have been advised by the Investigator about registering new interest with the EIBSS and we will be getting in contact with them..

78. We were unaware of any financial assistance or anything else about the infected blood scandal until the Inquiry got in touch with us.

Section 8. Other Issues

79. Soon after [H] passed away, we made a complaint to the Bristol University Hospital Trust.

80. In the complaint we raised concerns about the information given to us relating to [H] advanced liver damage, and we questioned the screening of his past blood transfusion, which is where we believed he got the HCV from.

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81. It is only from the record of this complaint that the Inquiry knew to get in touch with us and as a result we have been able to provide this statement.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated 07 June 2022