Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No.: WITN7018001
Exhibits:
Dated: 22/07/2022.

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 11 February 2022.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is name is GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B 1968 and my address is known to the Inquiry.

2. I am married and we have three children. I am currently unemployed due to being physically unwell. I used to be a hairdresser and therapist, which is quite a physical job.

3. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of my illness, how it has affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

Section 2. How Infected

4. My mother was Rhesus Negative. I have five older siblings one of them who are Rhesus Negative so my mother had to receive anti D Immunoglobulin injection during or after giving birth to each of my siblings.

5. I applied to access my late mother's medical records but have been turned down by the body as I am not the administrator of her estate, which was my father, but he is now also deceased. I have since appealed the decision, and in June 2022 I was informed that my mother's medical records were too degraded to view.

6. I believe I may have been infected by my late mother, however as I am unable to access her records I cannot say for certain.

7. Like my mother, I am also Rhesus Negative, but none of my children are. I could have also contracted HCV from receiving Anti D, or from receiving blood and blood products while giving birth.

8. My first child was born in 1989 and I received Anti D immunoglobulin before this delivery. My second child was born in 1991 and I also received Anti D during this delivery.

9. In 1996, I received Anti D during the delivery of my third child. I suffered from a serious haemorrhage after the delivery and received multiple transfusions of blood and blood products. I have kept records of all of the batch numbers of these blood and blood products.

10. No one ever informed me of the risk of contracting HCV as a result of receiving blood products or a blood transfusion.

11. I was turned away from donating blood after 1996. I believe that this was due to the fact that I had received a blood transfusion which could potentially have been contaminated with HCV or vCJD.

12. In October or November 2021, I had to have a routine blood test at the rheumatology department at Bristol Royal Infirmary. The test results confirmed that I had contracted HCV.

13. I had not felt well prior to this for a few years, but due to work and then the pandemic I was hesitant to get it checked out. But, on reflection, I had symptoms going back years.

14. I received the results via a letter from the consultant that I had tested positive for HCV. There was no further information provided about what to do next aside from a note to take another test I n three months to see if I had cleared the infection naturally or if the virus was live.

15. I was not provided with information about how to manage the infection, or to help me understand it. I believe I should have received information regarding the consequences of having HCV.

16. I think it was pretty poor that I found out in such a general manner given that it seems to be quite a serious infection. I was left to read about it in a letter to my GP from my consultant.

17. There was very little consideration of my feelings, and no explanation of what to expect or how to get read of it. It was just a wait and see diagnosis.

18. No one provided me with information about the risk of infecting others.

Section 3. Other Infections

19. I believe I may have been infected with vCJD too, as this has been stated as the reason I am unable to donate blood till date. This has also been a cause of severe stress and worry to me.

Section 4. Consent

20. I have been treated without my knowledge as I was unconscious at the time and no one sought my consent before I was given the blood and blood products.

21. I also believe I was not given adequate information of possible infections contained in the products and the affects they could inflict on me later in life.

Section 5. Impact

22. Shortly after the birth of my daughter, I began experiencing symptoms of HCV, in particular I had bruising that never went away for long periods of time. I had a blood test, but I don't think I was tested for HCV. I was told I did not have leukaemia though.

23. Since receiving the HCV diagnosis, I constantly worry and stress about whether I will infect anyone close to me, and if I have already. I have to have blood tests regularly and I always worry that the nurse may come in contact with my blood. It is constantly on my mind, 24 hours a day.

24. Physically, I am in constant pain and unable to do the simple things I used to such as preparing food and walking any real distance.

25. I have become aware that many of the current medical issues I suffer from are likely to be as a result of the HCV infection. I have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, psoriatic arthritis and gum disease. I also have high blood pressure and high cholesterol. I also suffer from brain fog, depression, and I have been diagnosed with liver cirrhosis.

26. I feel tired all the time and I have unbearable joint pain. I am in pain daily. Having had no previous medical problems, I now have to take 10 to 15 tablets on a daily basis and because of this I am now immunocompromised, meaning I have to be very careful about catching any other infection.

27. I have had no treatment for HCV, I am on medication for diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. My results have yet to come back from the last liver scan which I had in December 2021.

28. I do not believe I have been offered all the help I need as there has been no plan given to me or pathway to manage my healthcare issues and the main issue the HCV infection.

29. I think I should have been offered more help with dental care, as a result of the HCV and the diabetes, I have lost 11 teeth this year. Due to the global pandemic, my local dentists have refused to take on new NHS patients, so I have been unable to have the remaining loose teeth removed and get any dentures. I cannot afford to go private, so I am stuck.

30. I find that taking so many medications on a daily basis has been mentally draining, I almost feel like my body is reaching saturation point. Physically, I am nauseous most days, tired all the time and the tablets I take do not seem to stop the pain. It has been nearly nine months since I started taking them all and it seems I feel worse now than I did before taking them, and I am overwhelmed from the diagnosis.

31. My infected status has impacted on my medical treatment, I feel anxious about going to appointments where blood is taken in case of cross contamination, and although I have been unable to get a dental appointment, when I do, I know I will be highly stressed due to the close contact with the dental team.

32. I rarely go out, so I have no social life. I have been to see one of my children at his new house, but only once, since the diagnosis, I am wary of catching a new infection and generally going out.

33. The fear of stigma is overwhelming. Therefore, I have not told anyone who is not a direct family member. This has exacerbated my depression, and I have been to some dark places since being diagnosed.

34. I am unable to concentrate for long periods of time, I was doing a course online, but I have been unable to finish it as yet. I have severe brain fog.

35. I am unemployed at the moment, and it is difficult to think about taking up a new position, with the health constrictions and the physical impact of the medications on me at present. I am not sure I would be able to cope in a new office setting and I am unable to physically move much. It is hard to see a way forward.

36. I used to be a hairdresser and therapist, which is quite a physical job, and I earned approximately £25K per annum.

37. Over the years, my illness affected my ability to hold a job down in one place and I became a self-saboteur as far as keeping friends and jobs were concerned. It has affected every aspect of my life.

38. Financially this has left us very short of money, with little hope of it changing in the near future. This is added to by having to attend lots of medical appointments on public transport or taxis costing both time and money.

39. The impact on my family is great, my husband is amazing, after working all day, he comes home and has to do the things I cannot physically do, like hoovering, making the meals and sorting out the washing, cooking and cleaning.

40. At the moment he is still working from home a couple of days a week, so I have help most of the time. I am now unable to walk my dog, so my son and husband do that daily. The thought I may have passed

this on to them must also be mentally straining for them, so it is not easy.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

41. I have had difficulty getting treatment for my dental problems, due to dentists not taking on NHS patients. However, I am also quite anxious about going to see the dentist due to my HCV diagnosis.

42. I have not been offered treatment or being informed about options for treatment for the HCV.

43. I have never been offered counselling or psychological support services due to being diagnosed with HCV.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

44. I have yet to apply for financial support as I have been informed that I am unable to make a claim for support due to the dates of when I received the blood and blood products.

45. I got in contact with the Hepatitis C Trust and I was informed about the financial support scheme. The Hep C Trust stated that I will require a liver specialist to sign off the documentation in order to submit an application for support.

46. I have yet to see a liver specialist due to the backlog of patients from the pandemic. It also feels like if you mention the Infected blood Inquiry, the NHS just fobs you off a bit.

Section 8. Other Issues

47. I believe if people have been stopped from giving blood because they may have been infected from any blood products then they should have been given any access to testing upon request.

48. People should be able to test for all infections and have access to compensation for distress and the mental and physical effects of testing positive to a disease they believe they contracted from NHS blood and blood products.

49. Any help they need should be given and the NHS should be more open and honest about the fact that these infections happened and provide support to people in relation to the health and financial support processes.

50. I believe the batch numbers from my transfusion products and anything from my late mother's records are relevant, and if I could get access to these it could confirm when I contracted HCV.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 22/07/2022