

Witness Name: **GRO-B**
Statement No.: WITN7058001
Exhibits: None
Dated:

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** 1988 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I live alone, but have family living 50 miles away. I have a girlfriend who I see through the week and I have enjoyable hobbies such as golf and mountaineering. I volunteer for the RNLI coastguard search and rescue.
2. I intend to speak about my nan, **GRO-B:G** and her experience contracting hepatitis C via a blood transfusion, the treatment she received, and the impact it has had on her life and our family's life. My mum, **GRO-B**, has provided a witness statement which describes in detail what happened to my nan

GRO-B I would like to request that my statement is read in conjunction with my mum's because the focus of my statement is on the impact of nan's infection on me. My brother **GRO-B** has also provided a witness statement **GRO-B**

Section 2. How Affected

3. My nan was infected with hepatitis C in December 1977 when she received infected blood to treat her anaemia and menorrhagia. She was not diagnosed until September 2002. I was 15 years old. From my memory, I believe this diagnosis came about as a result of a routine blood screen, my nan had been to see her GP because she had been feeling unwell and lethargic for some time. My nan was then referred to the Bristol Royal Infirmary for treatment.
4. I remember most of the information being kept away from me until later years. I studied physiotherapy at university and once I was working in a clinical setting I understood so much more. My nan would openly talk to me about her illness and how she came about contracting it many years ago. I don't believe I was ever tested.

Section 3. Other Infections

5. My nan was infected with hepatitis C only.

Section 4. Consent

6. I do not know much about consent in relation to my nan's medical infection, diagnosis and treatment, my mum's witness statement sets this out in detail.

Section 5. Impact

7. My nan had a huge impact on my life. I have very early memories of her from when I was a child, all the way through to her death. I spent a lot of time with my nan and saw her about four times per week. My mum would often pick me up from school with my siblings and drive straight to nan's house, where we would spend hours playing in the garden and watching the television together. My earliest memories are of being at her house. I continued to go round after school right up until I was 17 and joined the GRO-B. Even when I was away I called my nan three times per week, I would see her every time I came home, without fail. She was my rock, my biggest supporter in life and someone who always helped me through all of life's ups and downs.
8. In the early years of her diagnosis, I was not told much about what my nan was dealing with. Nonetheless I could see the impact her diagnosis was having on my mother, my grandfather and on my nan herself. She started her first round of treatment with Interferon and Ribavirin in July 2003 which made her incredibly sick. She would be exhausted in the days when my mum took me to visit and would often cancel visits as she was too unwell. She didn't want us as young grandchildren to see her unwell. Sadly, we felt her stress in the first cycle of treatment. She lost some of her hair which affected her greatly. The treatment put strain on her marriage with my grandad who had to care and support her with home tasks because she was physically so unwell and unable to help around the home. This treatment lasted for around 12 months but it did not clear the virus. From my memory and by my nan's own words, it was the toughest thing she had ever been through.
9. The first round of treatment left her with some side effects which remained even after she stopped taking it. A major one was peripheral neuropathy of her legs and feet. My nan told me that the pain in her feet and legs limited her life in the biggest

possible way. She informed me that her feet and lower legs felt as if they were on fire all of the time. For the best part of 10 years she struggled to walk due to the pain, she struggled to sleep, and she would spend many hours through the night awake and sitting on the side of the bed. I remember on many occasions taking her to the GP, and to the pain management clinic at the Bristol Royal Infirmary for further investigations, treatment, and support. She tried many different medications over the years and many different therapies, but sadly none were successful at treating her peripheral neuropathy.

10. Following my nan's first round of treatment, she had a number of falls at home and when out shopping due to her poor balance resulting from her numb feet. She fractured her spine a number of times, often requiring hospital admission and investigation. She also fractured her wrist and elbow as a result of her falls. She had a number of falls where she landed on her face again requiring hospital admissions. The falls and the resulting injuries were routine for her due to the pain and discomfort of the peripheral neuropathy.
11. For many years I was responsible for taking her out of the house so she could complete her food shop and spend time with the family and her friends. I also took her to many of her hospital and physiotherapy appointments as well as to the shops so that she could buy walking aids, a rising chair to assist her getting in and out of her seat, and other equipment to use in and around the home and bathroom.
12. In the final five years of her life she was unable to leave the house safely on her own. I was required to be her carer and assist her three times per week with anything she needed to do outside of the house. Nan required a huge amount of support from the NHS, social services and her family. She sadly had to deal with so much pain, discomfort, and inability to do basic tasks for easily 10 years of her life. This led to low mood, depression, and sadness because contracting hepatitis C had been

through no fault of her own. She was burdened with this physical and mental pain for a large portion of her remaining years. We as a family also shared this burden and it has impacted us all emotionally over the years.

13. My nan went through a second round of treatment which she started in 2016. This was a 12 week course of Viekirax, Exviera and Ribavirin which successfully cleared the virus. My nan was later diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. She was looked after at home by myself and my family until she passed away in September 2018.
14. Mentally I found my nan's infection very difficult to deal with. I always tried to be strong for her and my family. During her illness I would always put a brave face on and offer advice from my own clinical and professional experience as a physiotherapist. During her last few months in 2018, she was often unwell and spent periods in hospital – I found this very tough. I would often cry on my 50 mile drive home after caring for her, before bed, and in the morning when I woke. I wasn't able to deal with this any other way as I felt the emotional toll on my nan and the family was huge. So I kept it all in front of my family, then cried and was upset in my own time. This affected my work, social life and personal relationships. My relationship with my girlfriend broke down after my nan passed because I struggled so much. Whilst caring for her at the end of her life, I would often stay with her for 12 hours a day. This was exhausting but my family and I did our best alongside the nurses. Those two to three months were physically demanding and I lost my fitness and health due to being so sedentary, just sitting by her bedside .
15. My nan did face stigma as a result of her infection with hepatitis C. She was always made to feel a slight outcast by members of her peer group. She felt sad about this as it wasn't her fault. I believe it upset her more than she let on.
16. It affected my education, and later, my work. I wasn't great at school but I remember struggling to concentrate in class. The impact the treatments had on my nan and on

my mother caused me great stress and in turn this impacted on my performance at school. It hugely affected my work too. I cared for my nan for nearly six months – I would sit with her in hospital and at home while she was dying. I worked from there as best as I could but I was exhausted from sleepless nights. It was difficult to concentrate on work. My boss was very understanding and I felt torn between work and my nan, however she took priority. I lived 50 miles away so I would either stay at my nan's in the spare room, or sleep on my friend's sofa. Sometimes I would stay in hotels when I could afford it. I needed to be by her side to care for her.

17. I gave up my career as a physiotherapist after my nan's death because I couldn't cope with treating other end of life and sick patients. It upset me and reminded me of my nan far too much. So I left my profession. As a result this impacted my finances.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

18. The NHS and care staff looked after her incredibly well towards her final years.
19. My nan was offered counselling and medications for her mood, but she had lost faith in the NHS and she didn't feel comfortable taking or engaging. She dealt with her low mood as best she could herself but this caused a fractious relationship with my mother, and as a result meant that I had to play a larger role. I was never offered counselling or psychological support because I lived out of area. I would have welcomed it as I struggled to deal with her death. I've just had to deal with it myself.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

20. The financial support schemes helped her, they supported her to get taxis to and from the hospital. I know little about them but my mum's statement deals with this in more detail.

Section 8. Other Issues

21. I want my nan, and others like her, to have justice. The impact on my nan's life, and everyone around her, was unimaginable. I believe if there is any form of compensation then as a family we would welcome it. From the age of 15 through to 30, I supported, cared, and gave everything for my nan. I would welcome the Inquiry formally closing the door on all of this, allowing us to move on in her name respectfully.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

04/08/2022