

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN7155001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: August 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B**

I, **GRO-B** will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My full name is **GRO-B**. I was born on **GRO-B** 1961, and I live at **GRO-B**
2. I am infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through a contaminated blood transfusion.
3. This Witness Statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

4. In or around 1979, I was attacked with a glass at a nightclub and the tendons in my wrist to include the radial artery were cut. I was rushed by ambulance to the Hackney Hospital with a tourniquet around my arm. I lost a lot of blood and was given a blood transfusion.
5. I have been unwell for very many years. I haven't been able to work since 2005. In June 2022 I was diagnosed as having chronic HCV. My blood was sampled and tested by my GP revealing an abnormal liver function/fatty liver. I was then referred to Dr [GRO-B] Consultant Hepatologist at the [GRO-B] [GRO-B] Dr [GRO-B] believes that the virus has lain dormant in my body for decades. Without me knowing it, I have been infected with HCV for something in excess of 40 years.

Section 3. Other Infections

6. I am not aware of any other infection.

Section 4. Consent

7. I was not in a position to give consent when I had the blood transfusion as my radial artery was cut and I was having major surgery on an emergency basis. I then had no reason to believe that I might have HCV through the blood transfusion I was given. I am 60 years old, and it is incredible to me that I have been a ticking time bomb since 1979.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

8. When I was young, I was as fit as a fiddle, and I loved sport. I enjoyed playing football and I enjoyed boxing. I did karate and judo. I wrestled for London. I used to run 7 miles every day and I regularly did a half marathon run without effort. Now I can't even walk to the shop.
9. As stated, I have been unwell for very many years. I used to be a bricklayer by trade. I suffer with severe joint and muscle pain. I haven't been able to work since 2005 and I am now registered as disabled. I have widespread Arthritis (or Fibromyalgia) which I now know to be linked to and exacerbated by HCV.
10. I suffer with chronic fatigue. I have a poor appetite and I have started to lose weight. I have itchy skin. I bruise easily. When I had my Covid-19 jabs, I was so bruised, I looked like I had been beaten up. I am bloated. In short, I have all the symptoms of HCV except for jaundice. No-one knew what was wrong with me. I could never put my finger on it. At one time it was even thought that I might have a lactose intolerance.
11. I also suffer with anxiety and depression. As soon as I found out that I was infected with HCV, the shock of it knocked me for six. My mind went racing and I didn't know what to do with myself. My mind literally did somersaults. It is a terrifying situation to be in. You have to think of everyone you have to tell. My thoughts immediately moved to my partner, GRO-B and then I thought of our children and our grandchildren. GRO-B tested negative for HCV, and I felt relieved for her and better assured about the rest of the family, but then you question (and doubt) yourself: 'have I shared a toothbrush with them?', 'what if someone had a gum problem and has been cross infected?' We had to be tested for HIV/AIDS too. Again, you question yourself 'If I were infected with HIV, surely I would be showing signs of it by now!' I remember a news report from years ago about people becoming infected with HIV through blood products and transfusion, but I didn't appreciate that hepatitis was also a

problem. A person feels embarrassed and ashamed. Because of the stigma of the infection, it is hard to tell people you have HCV. The stress of it all is beyond words.

12. The HCV infection has caused significant damage to my liver. I have pains in my stomach that I had put down to Arthritis. When I had my liver ultrasound scan, I could see scarring for myself on the screen. It looked to me like the black stripes on a zebra. The technician couldn't confirm or deny my fears but said the doctor would have to have the report first. When I subsequently received the letter confirming the diagnosis of chronic HCV and liver cirrhosis, my mind went racing again. It is a hard thing to see written down in black and white. I am now left worried about a reduced life span expectancy of what could be up to 15 years.

13. As well as the huge impact on me physically and mentally, I have been financially impacted over very many years. I earned good money when I was able to work bricklaying, but when I became increasingly unwell, I began to lose confidence in what I could commit to. GRO-B and I live in rented accommodation. One of my biggest regrets is that we didn't buy a property to live in. Because I often fell ill, I didn't feel up to applying for and committing to a mortgage. I am currently in deep financial trouble. I have a lot of credit card debt and am left with next to nothing by way of disposable income to meet our food, gas and electricity needs. GRO-B and I have no social life. I am too unwell to contemplate it even if I could afford it. Some days, I can't get out of my armchair, and it hurts too much to get in and out of a car. I take a cocktail of drugs to include Tramadol and Morphine for my pain and I have high blood pressure. The hospital is currently checking my kidneys. I don't know why.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

14. I have just started on a three-month course of Epclusa as clearing treatment for HCV. I have not been offered any counselling.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

15. I was not formerly aware that I was infected with HCV. Therefore, I have not had any financial assistance from the Trusts and Funds. I intend making an application for financial assistance through EIBSS and I believe that I have Dr GRO-B's support with this. I have contacted my GP surgery and understand that nothing of the 1979 incident and blood transfusion is documented with them. I had major surgery at the Hackney Hospital, and I was given copious stitches. The use of my right thumb is now limited. I was informed that all my medical records for the year 1979 had been destroyed and the Hackney Hospital no longer exists.

16. My liver Specialist Nurse has seen a document referencing 'contaminated blood' against my notes and she is assisting me in gathering the evidence I need to smooth my application to EIBSS. She is liaising with St Bartholomew's Hospital (Barts) on my behalf as Barts should hold all the Hackney Hospital records stored on microfilm.

Anonymity

17. I wish to apply for anonymity, and I understand that this redacted Statement will be published by the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-B

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Dated23rd August 2022.....