

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN7263001

Dated: 2nd November 2022

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT **GRO-B**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

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

### 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B** My date of birth is **GRO-B** and my address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I live with my husband **GRO-B**
3. I intend to speak about my mother's infection of hepatitis C, which we as a family, believe she contracted from a blood transfusion in the **GRO-B** My brother **GRO-B** who has also made a statement to the Inquiry under witness number **GRO-B** but with differing aspects of how we experienced our mother's infection. In particular, the nature of her

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illness, how the illness affected her, the treatment she wasn't offered, the impact it has had on her, on me and the whole family.

## **2. How Infected**

1. I remember sometime in the early **GRO-B** my mam coming home from the Diabetic Clinic at the **GRO-B** clearly shaken and distressed. She asked if she could speak with us and told the family that she had just been informed by the Consultant at the **GRO-B** that she had hepatitis C and that there was no treatment to be offered and nothing could be done about it.
2. I was instantly very worried as quite randomly I had recently watched an interview on the television with the actress **GRO-A** who was talking quite candidly, about her recent hepatitis C diagnosis. She explained that it was a disease that she understood she would eventually die from.
3. I have always thought it was so wrong for my mam to have had to deal with this new illness, on top of her Type 1 Diabetes, as this was more than enough for her to have to cope with.
4. I remember Mam saying that the doctor had asked her if she'd previously had any blood transfusions. We knew that she had previously had two of them when my brother **GRO-B** and I were born. We both had birth complications. It had become a running joke in the family how big we were when born, but this turned out not to be funny anymore.

## **3. Other Infections**

1. I am aware my mam was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes when she was **GRO-B** years old and earlier this year, she was diagnosed with Giant Cell Arteritis.
2. I am unaware of any other infections apart from hepatitis C.

4. Consent

1. As far as I am aware my mam did not give consent for any blood transfusion and was not told of the risk.
2. As far as I am aware my mam was not informed of any testing for hepatitis C. Her tests were usually the periodic type for her Type 1 Diabetes.

5. Impact

1. Once my mam knew she had been infected with hepatitis C she completely lost her confidence. She would always strive to better herself and I knew it was a key frustration and a distressing adjustment for her to have to deal with two chronic illnesses at the same time at such a young age. It felt undeserved. I know she just simply wanted to be like the other mothers bringing up her children and now somehow felt restricted and held back because she was feeling so poorly.
2. She really struggled with feeling unwell for many years. She suffered from weakness and on times I had to take to her bed. A few times we were very worried because her vomit became very dark in colour, to be really detailed and blunt about it. Family arrangements were hindered or cancelled; it became very unsettling. When we would go on holidays, she would sometimes miss entire days having to staying in her room. Each holiday started to become less and less exciting because we knew Mam was apprehensive that she might get a bout again when we were away.
3. At home, Mam's routine changed after we found out about her diagnosis. She was just super cautious with everything, her cutlery, her bathroom things, her own cup and mug but that seemed no way to live in your own home. It was just an underlying chronic level of stress that we all experienced, but she took the advice from the NHS and did it anyway to try and make the best of a bad situation as best she could.

4. We even ended up having to spend Christmas without her a couple of times because she was in bed and the smell of the food etc was making her feel nauseous which then made her feel even more disheartened.
5. I always felt for my mam when it came to self-test every day for the diabetes control. It became an almost twisted situation that she had the paranoia of her blood that she had been informed had contagion in it and at the same time she had to extract it daily to test her blood sugars for her diabetes complaint. It just became a horrendous situation really. Then made worse because her sugar levels were sky high or dangerously low.
6. At her request we all agreed to keep it to ourselves about Mam's infection. If that made her at least more relaxed about worrying what people might say about her. It was the least we could do.
7. Hepatitis C was an unwelcome added health scare that frankly my mam didn't deserve to have and shouldn't have had to deal with. She has always done her best to look after herself, watching what she eats, watching what she drank, either from an alcohol level perspective or a sugar content one. To add insult to injury she then ended up having to worry about what glass she was using to drink from. Back then there was zero information given about the level of contagion etc.
8. My father was deeply affected by the change too. He didn't like to talk openly about it but we could see the pressure he was under and he did his best to support my mam as he'd always done.

## **6. Treatment/Care/Support**

1. My mam was wondering for years why she felt unwell before she was actually diagnosed with hepatitis C. I understand that she was informed by the NHS that discovering it was "by luck". I don't understand and question that.



2. The whole approach of how my mam was informed of her status is nothing less than disgraceful. It was delivered as a sort of "by the way" manner during a diabetic appointment with her Consultant Dr **GRO-B** **GRO-B** at the **GRO-B**. On my mam's account of how he handled her case it gives me the impression of a clinical arrogance that has nothing to do with care in the community.
3. My mam didn't get any information or guidance from the NHS after the diagnosis. On the contrary, there were no Google searches back then, and the benefit of full access to articles and information was not available so we relied on those things via our health sector, so I really do think that my mam was let down tremendously by the way she wasn't looked after.
4. I know my mam did not receive any counselling or support. She was told to just get on with it, so as a family, we did. What else could we have done. It's my fervent wish that things have improved lately as they couldn't get much worse as far as this matter is concerned.

## **7. Financial Assistance**

1. My mam did not receive any financial assistance through contracting hepatitis C.
2. I know she was going to apply to the Skipton Fund but didn't complete the application paperwork or submit it. She was told not to, because she was deemed to not meet the criteria.
3. I've had the opportunity to look at this in a lot more detail recently, and I have identified that my mam did in fact meet the criteria, because of her being a chronic and symptomatic hepatitis C sufferer after the initial six months had passed from becoming infected in the early 70s from the blood transfusions. By not 'self-clearing' within the first six months of being infected, would have therefore qualified her to have joined the said scheme. Again, the misinformation provided to my mam just like the misinformation about keeping her personal items isolated at home,

didn't aid her confidence in the system, and didn't give her the will to complete that previous application to register on the said scheme to receive, what is in fact, entitled to her from catching hepatitis C within an NHS Medical Facility.

## 8. Other Issues

1. I also believe my mam's diagnosis of Type 1 Diabetes is because she was infected with hepatitis C. There is no history in our immediate ancestry of it and up until her early forties she was a healthy, hardworking mam who exercised regularly and ate her home cooked food. She rarely drank, one glass perhaps with the occasional meal or at a celebration.
2. I feel my brother GRO-B has been affected by the dubious suggestion in the letter dated GRO-B by Dr GRO-B exhibited to my mam's witness statement to the Inquiry at GRO-B that he inadvertently exposed my mam to hepatitis via a previous girlfriend. That has absolutely no relevance to anything that has been put forward here, in any event. We would state, as a family, we think nothing of the sort, and we disregard fully Dr GRO-B's opinion in this matter. I know my brother has very strong views on this; which put simply, is that the overreaching hearsay opinion by the consultant has been offered with no proof and no medical screening of the aforementioned person within GRO-B's social network at the time. Let alone the results of that testing to back up that said claim.
3. This recent process has been very helpful. I know more information now than I ever have since my mam's diagnosis. The more that we find out by the Sir Brian Langstaff inquiry hearings, the more we can join the dots of mishandled stages throughout my mam's medical history with hepatitis C. What is already coming to the fore - via the inquiry of the handling in the 70s, 80s and 90s of the infected blood patients - I, like most, also find this matter outrageous to have ever

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occurred within all levels of Public Sector Establishments within the U.K.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed.

GRO-B

Dated.

02/11/22