

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN7460001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: November 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B I reside at GRO-B
GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B I am single, I have separated
from my partner of 24 years and have relocated to GRO-B for a fresh
start. I have 2 adult sons.

2. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to
my full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited
records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end
of this statement.

Section 2. How infected

3. I was infected with Hepatitis C via a blood transfusion. On the 11th of February 1987 when I was 18 years of age, I had a mass rectal bleed, they call it a PR bleed. I was taken to Old Church Hospital in Romford
4. I understand the blood transfusion I was given was a large one, I believe they gave me 7 pints of blood.
5. I spent 2 weeks in hospital having various investigations before I was sent home.
6. I do not remember being taken to hospital as I had passed out at home. My mum and dad had to take me to the hospital.
7. I was told the bleed had been caused due to a cyst that had burst on my intestine. They thoroughly examined me, I had gastroscopies and colonoscopies to investigate the cause and they never found any tears or anything to explain it so they concluded it must have been a cyst.
8. At one point they said they would remove some of my intestines, but this never happened. This was the only time I had a bleed like this. I have not had one since
9. After I had been discharged, I had to go back on the 19th of June for further investigations and for bloods to be taken and by September 1987 my blood count had returned back to normal.
10. I did suffer with piles after this but nothing like what had happened. I had all sorts of scans. After the blood transfusion I was constantly complaining that something was wrong, for years I was complaining of feeling unwell. The GP was dismissive and said it was due to the lifestyle I was leading. I was 17 years old, at the time I was still a teenager. I had just left school.
11. Later on in life when I had moved out of my parents and in with my partner I moved to a different GP surgery and went to talk to them about not feeling well and something not being quite right. I felt that the GP was so ignorant

towards me and not listening to me. Eventually I got so frustrated that I was being ignored that I just burst into the room shouting and swearing. He then listened to me.

Section 3. Other Infections

12. I was not infected with any other infections other than Hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

13. I don't know if the blood transfusion was provided without consent as I was unconscious and my parents had taken me to hospital, I do not know if they consented or what they were told about it. It was a life or death situation, I was only 17 so I assume they just got on with giving it to me.

14. I am not sure what information was given to my parents if any about the blood transfusion, I was passed out so didn't know anything about it. My dad has passed away I have tried to talk to my mum but she is now 79 and she does not fully recall what was said on the day.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

15. I was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of the blood transfusion. It was not until I was in my mid 20s when I was not feeling right and they did some tests, they eventually tested for Hepatitis C and I was diagnosed on April 18th 2001.

16. Between the blood transfusion and the 18th of April 2001 I had been back and forth to the doctor saying I had stomach ache or some other complaint where I was not feeling well. Food and drink were affecting me and I complained to the GP that I must be allergic to something or something else wasn't right, I said I had been complaining for years and that I had not been right since the blood transfusion, it was then they did the tests I was finally diagnosed after years of complaining.

ANONYMOUS

17. I did not even know what Hepatitis C was when I was diagnosed, I had never heard of it. I was just given a leaflet and that was it, it was a new disease and I had not heard of it. I didn't know what to do my world fell apart, I felt very alienated by being infected.
18. I feel tests should have been done much earlier when I was complaining to my GP of not feeling well. I feel I was ignored by my GP for years and suffered years of symptoms that I didn't need to suffer with if he had listened to me instead of accusing me of drinking too much or blaming my lifestyle. The GP was just ignorant not listening to me.
19. I can remember when I was referred for tests at the hospital, I had been a couple of times and one of the doctors said did they know I had had a blood transfusion and had not been tested for Hepatitis C, that's when they tested and I went back for the results.
20. After I was diagnosed, I experienced bouts of depression and anxiety after hearing I was infected. It impacted my relationships and friendships in my 20s. I did tell some friends but there was a stigma, people assumed you contracted it through drugs or being gay.
21. I have never found out the extent of the damage the Hepatitis C did to my liver, I did have a liver biopsy and I was told I was stage 3 but I don't really know what that means. It was all a big shock for me. I had 2 kids and a partner, I had bought a house and this was big stuff to me, I was so shocked, my world fell apart.
22. I had to have a heart bypass in 2015, I had a heart attack. I didn't realise I had had a heart attack I just felt unwell and really tired and it came to light I had had a heart attack and needed the bypass. I do wonder if the stress of the infection contributed to this. I know the stress of the infection and the treatment I needed contributed to the breakdown of my relationship.

ANONYMOUS

23. I had treatment for the Hepatitis C. I was given Interferon, it was horrendous, I had unbelievable symptoms. I was talked into having the treatment, I was told it was a new drug. I received 125ml of interferon and was told it was like oral chemotherapy, I had to have it weekly. They wanted me to go to the hospital to have it, but this was stressing me out, so they showed me how to do it at home so I could do it myself. I also had to take Ribavirin as well, that was in tablet form and I had to take 8 a day. I think it was more the injection of interferon that caused me the horrendous side effects. When I injected myself it took me a good 3 to 4 days to get over it, it wiped me out, it was like I was living through a nightmare, it made me paranoid, anxious and heightened my senses, noise would irritate me, it was like torture. The nurse dealing with me at the hospital told me to keep in touch so I would go to see her once a month and she told me that I was the only person who had stuck to the course of treatment as it was so harsh. All I knew was that I had two kids and a Mrs, I had a family to look after and in my mind I needed to do this to get better to look after my family.
24. I had severe mental health side effects from the treatment. I thought I was going mad. I also had weight loss and cold sweats. I had sensory processing issues. At some point at the hospital, it was mentioned about stopping the treatment, I think it was because how my partner said it was affecting me, this was about 5 months into the 6 month course of treatment, and there was talk of stopping it due to the impact it was having, but I was determined to see it through. I really had a horrendous time with it.
25. I had fatigue and didn't want to eat so I lost weight, I was drained of energy. I also had big red marks coming up at the injection sites, they came up the size of saucers literally at every injection site they came up, so I was having some reaction to the medication. I had to show them how I was injecting at the hospital because of this and they said I was injecting ok. There was no explanation or treatment for the red marks or itching.
26. The treatment had a severe impact on my relationship, I don't know what my partner thought, the kids were young and didn't understand. I was acting

ANONYMOUS

moody and shouting when they were playing as I couldn't handle the noise. My neighbours thought I was acting out of character. At certain times I thought the devil was coming to get the kids, I used to have real nightmares and was not thinking straight. I didn't know what I was talking about and was unable to try and explain myself. The treatment made me withdrawn and I didn't want to tell people about it due to the association with having AIDS, being a junkie or homosexual.

27. I felt alienated from my family, my parents and siblings didn't understand what I was going through.

28. I was a self-employed window cleaner and ran my own business. I had recently bought a house, had a mortgage and was working hard 6 to 7 days a week to provide for my family and to try and get on in life. As a result of the infection and treatment I was unable to work at times and lost part of the business. I sold some of it and lived on the money for a while. I did manage to keep paying the mortgage and carried on working as much as I could when I could, I never knew any other way. I didn't want to claim benefits.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

29. Once it was confirmed that I had Hepatitis C, I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in accessing any treatments. I did have to tell my dentist, again that was a bit embarrassing to have to start telling people, but I didn't have any problems with the dentist.

30. I have not had any counselling or psychological support, nothing was ever offered to me. This is why I find it hard talking about it and bringing stuff up now that I buried in the back of my mind a long time ago after the treatment was done. I was just relieved the treatment was over and done with and stopped. I had to have a few blood tests after the treatment was done and was told the infection had been cleared but had no further follow ups or kept an eye on. I really don't know why it was not put on record so I could be tracked and traced easily and told about the potential infection.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

31. I have received no assistance from any of the trusts or funds that were set up. I did not know about them, no one told me about them.

Section 8. Other Issues

32. When having treatment I was told that I was lucky to be having the treatment, lucky! They gave it to me in the first place, how was I lucky? I am not happy about what happened. Even after I had the treatment and got back on my feet I was not happy I was angry and maybe I am still angry that this has happened and that it has taken so long for people to listen to what happened.

33. All of this has had a massive mental impact on me. I have buried it deep in my mind and put up so many defence systems, I put walls up. Going through this process has brought so many memories back. I believe the infection and the treatment caused if not contributed to the break down of my long term relationship. I have had a girlfriend since but when I told her about the Hepatitis C and previously being infected she distanced herself from me. It is something I cannot get rid of, I cannot escape having previously been infected and it makes me shy away from so much.

34. I felt like the system has failed a lot of people and that I was ignored by my GP for too long.

Anonymity

35. I want to be anonymous.

ANONYMOUS

36. I am willing to give evidence to the Inquiry if it helps my case.

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe the information contained in this witness statement to be true.

Signed ... GRO-B

Dated ... 12-12-2022