

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No.: WITN7471001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 30 November 2022

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5 November 2018.

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

### Section 1: Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B**. My date of birth is **GRO-B** and my address is **GRO-B**. In this statement I intend to speak about my mother's infection with Hepatitis B following a blood transfusion. in particular, the nature of her illness, how the illness affected my mother and I, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

**Section 2: How Infected**

2. My mum was infected with Hepatitis B following a blood transfusion on the day that my twin brother and I were born in GRO-B 1972. After giving birth, the afterbirth was left inside my mum's womb, and this got infected and had to be removed with surgery. This was at the Southern General Hospital.
3. It is my understanding that there were no discussion of risks prior to the transfusions. I have been told that my mum was only aware of the transfusion after she woke up from the surgery. It is my understanding that my mum lost a lot of blood, and this had to be replaced. My mum was given a blood transfusion and received two units of blood.
4. My mum was diagnosed when my brother and I were around 4 or 5 months old. My mum had taken us to visit her mum. My gran was shocked at the sight of my mum. My mum's skin and eyes had turned yellow. My gran got a bit of a fright and went to see the family doctor and informed him of my mum's condition. The doctor came to our house the next day to check on my mum, and she was told to go to the hospital straight away.
5. At this time there was some additional childcare stress, as one Auntie offered to look after me, and another offered to look after my brother. My mum did not want us to be separated. Eventually, one Auntie was able to take both of us. I do not remember how long my brother and I stayed with our aunt, as I was very young at the time, but I have been told that this was for 3 or 4 weeks.
6. My mum was diagnosed during this stay in the hospital, I understand that the doctor casually said to my mum "you have hepatitis" and did not provide very much further information.
7. I do not believe that my mum was given adequate information to understand and manage the infection.
8. I do not believe that information should have been provided to my mum earlier, however I believe that it would have been possible to advise my mum

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that she was being tested for Hepatitis specifically. I don't think that Hepatitis B was mentioned at the time that the tests were carried out. The communication should have been more clear at the time of diagnosis. My mum was advised of her hepatitis and then sent home without explanation.

9. As far as I am aware, my mum was given no information about the risk of infecting others, although she was aware that this was a possibility and was very conscious of this risk.

### **Section 3: Other Infections**

10. I do not believe that my mum received any infections other than Hepatitis B as a result of being given infected blood.

### **Section 4: Consent**

11. I do not believe that my mum was tested or tested without her knowledge, without her consent or without being given adequate or full information.

12. I do not believe that my mum was treated or tested for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5: Impact**

13. There was no physical impact of the Hepatitis B on my mum, except from surrounding the initial diagnosis when my mum was yellow and was admitted to hospital.

14. The mental impact of the hepatitis on my mum was significant. I did not understand the issues in the beginning as I was young, and not enough was known about obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) at the time. I remember that my brother and I always had to thoroughly and regularly wash our hands. If we stood in dog excrement in the street, it was a big deal. This would stress my mum out and she would shout. Everything was sanitised within an inch of its life.

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15. I recall fighting a bully in the playground as a child and cutting my hand. When this was brought up to my mum, I was told to wash my hands immediately because I had touched the bully's hair. My family were the cleanest people I knew. I was not allowed to have friends to stay overnight at our house unless they brought their own bed with them. I missed out on regular things that other children enjoyed. I also wanted a dog as a child, but this was not allowed because the house had to be very clean.
16. As a child, I also had to follow my mum around the house, checking that every switch and outlet was turned off. I would then be quizzed about it later. As children, we thought that this was normal behaviour.
17. As an adult, I have also developed OCD. I am obsessively clean and tidy. My OCD takes up so much of my time. Until I was older, I thought that my upbringing was normal, although I do understand that it was not a great environment to be raised in.
18. My mum had OCD, depression and anxiety resulting from her Hepatitis C infection. The first time that we had really known that the OCD was a medical condition was when an occupational therapist was sent to my mum's work at the pharmacy.
19. During my lifetime, my mum has been in and out of hospitals, has had cortisone tablets for the Hepatitis B and has been on various other tablets for the OCD.
20. The main treatments that my mum has been on, aside from the cortisone tablets in the very beginning, were for her OCD.
21. I do not believe that my mum faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing treatment, certainly for the OCD my mum was offered numerous different tablets, but they were generally ineffective. I do not think that enough was known at the time about OCD, but I do understand that now it can be managed by cognitive behavioural therapy.

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22. I would not say that there were any physical or mental effects of treatment, as the treatment did not work.
23. My mother had to get her liver checked every year. This may have been because of the hepatitis, but also may have been because of prolonged use of medicine for osteoporosis.
24. The OCD deriving from the Hepatitis had an impact on my mum's family, private and social life. My mum was not able to relax, once she was on holiday and was so stressed that she had left the oven on that it ruined her holiday. My mum is never able to relax and has been riddled with anxiety and depression throughout my life. My mum often had clenched fists. It was not a good environment to grow up in, with my mum's OCD and having to clean and check everything.
25. My mum's hepatitis B has had an impact on my private, family and social life also. OCD is a horrible illness to have. My mum began depending on me and there was somewhat a role-switch, where I was looking after my mum instead of her looking after me. I had to assist my mum with her checks before leaving the house, and I have developed OCD; the compulsive cleaning has been passed on. I believe that this is learned behaviour, as I was taught how to clean and how to keep your household by my mum. I only know that everything needs to be sparkling clean. This has an impact on my life with my husband, and I see myself staying in to clean instead of going out and socialising with friends. Everything must be clean before I am able to relax. For example, when I put up my Christmas tree, my entire house must be cleaned from top to bottom. All of the corners of the house must be clean. I feel that I am exhibiting behaviour that I was taught as a child.
26. I have not suffered greatly from the stigma surrounding hepatitis, except from the odd person at school thinking that my mum was a drug user, or extra caution being taken when I give blood.
27. My brother has anxiety and depression, and some other mental health issues. He left home at the age of 18, potentially because he wanted to get away from

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the stress. My brother did have friends and took less responsibility than me for my mum's care, so most of the responsibility fell to me.

28. I am unable to comment on whether my mum's infection had an educational impact on me. I did not do well in school; however this is likely because I was bullied. I did get a good job as an adult.

29. After my mum was paid off from her work, she did not work again. My mum's OCD prevented her from working because she had to check everything so often it was difficult to attend work, and my mum was always late. As my mum was unable to work, this would have also had a financial impact on her.

### **Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support**

30. My mum did not face difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care or support in consequence of being infected with Hepatitis B. Although my mum was never offered counselling because of her Hepatitis B directly, she was offered counselling for the OCD that resulted from the Hepatitis B. My mum also attended a support group for others with OCD. My mum was also prescribed cortisone tablets for the Hepatitis B and various tablets for the OCD, as discussed earlier in my statement.

### **Section 7: Financial Assistance**

31. My mum did not receive any financial assistance for her Hepatitis B.

### **Section 8: Other Issues**

32. I wish to remain anonymous throughout this inquiry

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## Statement of Truth

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

Signed **GRO-B** \_\_\_\_\_

Dated Nov 30, 2022 \_\_\_\_\_