ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN7358001

Exhibits: WITN7358002-03

Dated: 29 November 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

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 1955, and my address is GRO-B, Glasgow GRO-B. I am widowed and I have two children and two grandchildren. In this statement I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C following a blood transfusion. in particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my family and our lives together.

Section 2: How Infected

2. I believe that I was infected with Hepatitis C following a blood transfusion received prior to giving birth my daughter in 1975. I was given some iron tablets and iron transfusions, and when these did not work, I was given blood transfusions. I believe I had two iron transfusions then two blood transfusions. I was advised at the time that I needed transfusions, to prevent my baby being born premature, but I do not recall any risks being discussed with me. I believe that this was at the Maternity Hospital at GRO-B but I was also in Robroyston Hospital, and I do not remember clearly which Hospital I received the transfusions in.

3. I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C in July 1994. I was a regular blood donor. A few weeks after donating blood, I received a letter thanking me for the donation but advising me that they were unable to use my blood as it was contaminated. The letter clarified that I did not have AIDS and was not HIV positive. Due to that statement, I believed that it could have been a sexually transmitted infection. The letter invited me to an appointment with a doctor at the blood transfusion centre, but unfortunately, I received the letter the day after the proposed appointment. I called the blood transfusion service to rearrange the appointment and asked what it was in relation to. I was advised that they couldn't tell me on the phone. I asked if I had a sexually transmitted infection and they responded “possibly,” and explained again that they would not tell me over the phone. I asked if it was life threatening and was advised “possibly.” I was again advised I would be sent out an appointment. I then went upstairs in my house and showed my husband the letter. We had an argument about potential infidelity, and this led to us not speaking for some time.

4. At the appointment they asked me to tell them about myself. I advised that I was married with two children and worked GRO-B in the bank. I was

then asked if I had ever injected drugs or shared needles. I advised I hadn't and I was asked if my husband or any previous partners did. I advised that my husband did not and neither did any previous partners. I was asked if we had any tattoos or piercings and I advised that neither of us had any tattoos and I had my ears pierced when I was a child. Neither my husband or myself had any other piercings. I was asked about the type of sex I had with my husband. I found the questions embarrassing and intrusive. I was asked if we had ever had any medical procedures abroad. Neither of us had. I was then asked about my medical history. They were particularly interested in any blood transfusions. I advised that I had been given a blood transfusion during my pregnancy in 1975.

5. I do not remember in detail what information I was given about the virus. I do remember a discussion where I was asked if I had heard of Hepatitis C. I responded saying that I had heard of this and I understood that people could get this from drinking dirty water. It was explained to me that I was referring to Hepatitis A. They then explained what Hepatitis B was. They explained that my blood was contaminated with Hepatitis C and that Hepatitis C was newly discovered, and I was advised that in the worst-case scenario, I could get liver cancer, cirrhosis of the liver or liver failure, as there was currently no effective treatment, I may need a transplant or die. I was unable to focus for the rest of the appointment.

6. I was told not to have unprotected sex, to separate my toiletries and to never leave my toothbrush or razor where someone else could use it. I was told that I had to get my husband and children tested as I may have passed it on to them by sex or by giving birth. I was told not to talk about it as there was a stigma surrounding Hepatitis C. I was frightened that I could have passed Hepatitis C on to my children as I would have been infected with Hepatitis C when I had my son in 1976. My children were tested and were clear of the virus. My husband did not want to get tested as he did not want to know if he was going to die. It was very scary. I did not fully understand the infection or how to manage my Hepatitis C on leaving this appointment.

7. I do not feel like the diagnosis appointment was handled well. It would have assisted me if I was asked if I wanted to bring someone with me to the appointment. I feel that it may have been better for my marriage if my husband had been able to come with me to the diagnosis appointment. I went in alone. My husband and I had already fallen out from reading the letter. I was advised that Hepatitis C was a blood borne virus and it was explained to me how it could be passed on. I was told that Hepatitis C could be passed on by transfusion, blood to blood contact, sharing needles and through sexual relationships. I felt dirty. No one has any point told me that you wouldn't get it from a toothbrush or sexual contact. I've not been updated or told anything new about how the virus is passed on from doctors since this appointment.

8. When I received the diagnosis letter, I had been a regular blood donor. I am not sure when they decided to test for Hepatitis C, and I do not know if they would have known before and not told me. I was advised I could not give blood again or donate my organs. This is something that particularly concerns me because I had been a blood donor and I had been infected with Hepatitis C; would I have potentially contaminated others?

Section 3: Other Infections

9. I do not believe that I have ever received any infections other than Hepatitis C as a result of my blood transfusion.

Section 4: Consent

10. I was consensually tested for research when it was discovered that my blood contained antibodies. The doctors advised that they had not yet come across this and I was told that they would take tests, but I would not get feedback from it. I believe this was called blind or anonymised research and I was advised that this was the best way for this research to be conducted.

11. I do not believe that I have been treated or tested without my knowledge, without my consent or without being given adequate or full information.

Section 5: Impact

12. I felt dirty because of my Hepatitis C. I became obsessed with cleanliness, and I take two or three showers a day. My infection has made me more reserved. I do not hug or kiss people socially, which I would have prior to my diagnosis. My behaviour changed and I was not as social as I had been in the past. Because I had been told not to drink alcohol, I did not socialise with friends often. This had a large impact on my husband as we previously liked to go out together, but I no longer wanted to. I felt like a leper.

13. A couple of years after the transfusion I suffered from bouts of bloating, abdominal pain, sickness, and diarrhoea. I was tested for Crohn's and IBS, but no conclusive results were drawn. I have urge incontinence and I have been prescribed loperamide for everyday use. Without this I would not be able to go out. I'm not sure if this is connected to my Hepatitis C or not. This has had an impact on my social life as I always must know where the nearest toilet is. It has been like this since the transfusion. I understand that this may be stress related; I have been stressed for years about my Hepatitis C.

14. I also now have poor kidney function. I have a lot of trouble sleeping and I have been prescribed an antidepressant called Mirtazapine. I've had various health problems, mainly digestive issues. I have rheumatoid arthritis and currently take Naproxen. I have dry eyes and have two different drops for days and night. I’m not sure if this is linked to Hepatitis C.

15. I was told to keep my diagnosis to myself, so I do not feel like I suffered greatly from the stigma associated with having Hepatitis C. However, when I was diagnosed, I was advised to tell my employer. At this time, I worked at in a bank, and I had to undergo a medical to see if I would be able to stay in

their Pension Scheme. After telling my employer about my diagnosis I felt that there was a difference in how I was treated at work. The doctor asked me questions about my personal life and the potential source of my infection. I found this very invasive, but I was advised that I had a duty to disclose this information. I felt that there was a stigma around telling people, especially the management team, but I presumed that it was important for them to know in case I cut myself at work.

16. I was still able to work after my diagnosis although I found it very stressful. At the time, I worked as a Branch Manager, but I soon looked for a less-stressful job. I had previously enjoyed this job, but I decided that I didn't want to be a manager anymore, I wanted to hide. I then looked for a job with less responsibility.

17. My view of myself changed. I understand that part of this was because of stress and things that I would have previously found easy became difficult for me. I did not know if this was a result directly of my Hepatitis C or if it was a result of the associated stress. I eventually began working at a car showroom as a receptionist. I chose this job so that I would have less responsibility than in my previous role. I financially suffered because of this. In addition, I felt that I was not performing to my previous standard. I was of the view that I did not have the ability that I used to have, and it took me a long time to feel better about myself.

18. My infection had a significant impact on my marriage. Initially we argued about infidelity, but once it was understood that this was not the source of the infection, I became very afraid of contaminating my husband. My husband and I were no longer intimate. We did not hold hands and it was as if he did not want to touch me anymore. This horrified me and, I am sure, him and we never had sex again.

19. My children were older by the time I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C, and they worried about me. I found handling babies very scary as I was concerned about passing on the infection. My grandchildren were born in 1999 and had

"clicky hips." One of my grandchildren required operations as a baby and I was afraid of cross-infection. I always wore gloves when handling them. This included when I was feeding them, changing them, or holding them. This was the case for years until they were adults. I have always been paranoid about cross-infection, and I still frequently wear my gloves in case I have a cut to prevent cross-infection.

20. When going on holiday I've had to pay increased insurance premiums, or I simply wouldn't go. When I changed job from the bank to the car showroom, I had difficulty getting life cover for my new mortgage. This caused difficulties when my husband and I switched mortgages. I bought a funeral plan because I could not get life insurance. This had a big impact on my life as I bought from Safe Hands, and they have gone into receivership.

21. I was offered Interferon to treat my Hepatitis C, however, I was provided with a leaflet that advised that interferon knocks out your own immune system and once you're on it you're on it for life. I did not feel ill at the time, and I was concerned about picking up every illness that goes around. I opted not to take Interferon and to wait for less radical treatment. I attended the Brownlee Centre until 2006 and was advised that I had antibodies which had cleared the virus and no longer needed my blood tested. I still could not give blood or donate organs and I was advised that I should still not have unprotected sex or leave my toothbrush or razor in the bathroom. I did not feel cured, I felt confused.

22. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in accessing treatment. I do not consider that any treatment was available that was not made available to me.

23. I recall attending the Brownlee Centre and being advised that there were eleven other people in Glasgow with Hepatitis C at the time. I met other infected people at the clinic and very quickly a couple of them died. In the first couple of years of my infection the media coverage on Hepatitis C was horrifying. People were dying. At the time that I was advised that my body spontaneously cleared the infection, the only media coverage of Hepatitis C

was that it was a death sentence. There was significant stigma surrounding Hepatitis C at the time and the word itself had negative connotations.

24. Generally, I have not noticed any significant difference in my medical care. However, recently I was admitted to hospital for surgery and an anaesthesiologist, wearing gloves and a mask, said "you have Hepatitis C, right?" None of my experiences in medical care have been great, however I cannot comment on whether this is related to my Hepatitis C.

Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support

25. I was not offered any counselling or psychological care or support due to becoming infected with Hepatitis C. I have had unrelated counselling sessions in the past, but no counselling was offered to assist me directly with my Hepatitis C.

Section 7: Financial Assistance

26. I have never received financial assistance as a result of becoming infected with Hepatitis C.

27. When I was diagnosed, my GP advised that she did not know anything about Hepatitis C, but that she would investigate it. In 2006 another patient at the Brownlee Centre advised that he had made an application to the Skipton Fund and had been successful. I then applied to the Skipton Fund, my GP assisted me with completing my application and sent it. I received a letter from the Skipton Fund advising that as I had cleared the virus with past or present treatment, I did not meet the medical requirements for compensation from the Skipton Fund. I refer to this letter in **WITN7538002.** In 2003 I wrote to NHS Greater Glasgow and asked about compensation and received a response from Dr Syed Ahmed, Consultant in Public Health, advising that the Scottish Executive had not yet received details of how they intended to compensate people infected with contaminated blood products. He advised that he would

contact me if he heard anything further about this he copied this to my GP, but I never heard from him again. I refer to this in **WITN7538003.**

28. I have not applied for any other financial assistance related to my Hepatitis C.

Section 8: Other Issues

29. I wish to remain anonymous throughout this Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated