



Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN2106001

Dated: 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2019**INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY****FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B**

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.

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

**Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is the GRO-B 1967 and my address is known to the enquiry.
2. I can confirm that I have appointed Thompsons solicitors to be my legal representative. I confirm that the inquiry should send all correspondence regarding me to Thompsons.
3. In this statement, I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C. In particular, how I was infected, how the hepatitis C has affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it has had on me and my family.

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## Section 2. How infected

4. When I was 15 years of age I was involved in a road traffic accident. My father was a lorry driver and my younger brother and I were in his lorry. We were driving in Ayr when the accident happened. I was trapped in the lorry and had to be cut out by the emergency services. I was taken by ambulance to Ayr infirmary hospital. I was rushed into theatre where I required 18 stitches for a head injury. I had also broken my femur and the medical team put my leg in traction. When I came round, I was on a Ward. I was hooked up to a tube in my arm and was receiving blood. I remember being told that if you break your femur, you need a blood transfusion as you lose a lot of blood.

AYR HOSPITAL CONSULTANTS MR P MCWALLY AND MR J DOUGLAS BROWN

5. I cannot remember any of the consultant's names I was under at Ayr <sup>ORTHOPAEDIC</sup> infirmary. My father was in the next bed to me on the ward for about a <sup>SURGEONS</sup> week, recovering from his injuries. I was not given any advice before my operation about the risk of being exposed to infection. I was only 15-year-old at the time, and as far as I am aware my father was not given any advice or information about the risks of me being infected.
6. I remained in Ayr hospital for about 4 to 5 weeks. I was then transferred to Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary, Bankend Road, Dumfries. I was in this hospital for about three weeks. I remember I received a lot of pints of blood, intravenously, whilst I was in Ayr hospital.
7. There is no doubt in my mind that I became infected with hepatitis C in 1982, after my accident, following the blood transfusions. I have never engaged in any activity which would have rendered me suspect susceptible to infection.
8. In 2013, I was working for GRO-B in Carlisle. I began to get really tired all the time. As a lorry driver, you were allowed to drive for 4 1/2 hours but then you had to take a break. I found myself not being able to drive for that long. I was constantly pulling over as I could not

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concentrate on the road. I was exhausted all the time. At that time, even though I was so fatigued, I could not sleep at night. When I put my head on the pillow I could hear a banging noise. The noise was very loud and I initially thought it was coming from outside. I soon realised however that it was my heartbeat, irregular and loud. I recall on one occasion, I was driving home from work one day and I started to feel very ill. I was nauseous and wanted to vomit. I remember I was in the middle lane of three lanes on St Michaels Street, [GRO-B] Traffic was stationary as we were stopped at traffic lights. I could not stop myself being sick and I vomited over myself while sat in the car. My vomit was blood and had black lumps in. I can only describe these lumps as looking like mussel shells. I remember this was Friday and I made an appointment for the doctors for the following Monday.

9. I went to the doctors on the Monday. My doctor was Dr [GRO-B] at [GRO-B] [GRO-B] Dr [GRO-B] examined me, he told me my heart was beating faster than it should be. He took a blood sample. I drove home, it was only 2 miles away but when I got in there was a message on the answer machine asking me to call the surgery. I did so and Dr [GRO-B] told me I had to go straightaway to Dumfries Infirmary. He told me what Department to go to but I cannot remember where he said. I was taken to Ward 7, the admissions ward. I was seen by a [GRO-C] consultant, Dr [GRO-D] and another doctor Dr [GRO-D] Dr [GRO-D] said he was concerned about my blood and they wanted to run a few tests that would need sending off to Glasgow. I asked him what he was looking for and he said liver damage. He said there is something seriously wrong with your liver. They admitted me on to Ward 7. They put me on a drip and said I had no immune system. He seemed very cagey and it was all a bit confusing. In hindsight, I think they knew what was wrong with me but I cannot say that for certain. A few days later, whilst my partner at the time was visiting me Dr [GRO-D] approached my hospital bed. He asked [GRO-B] (my partner) and my mother to leave the room and they did so. He was with two other doctors and a young female junior doctor. He seemed very light-hearted, he said "I have good news and bad news for

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you". He said the tests have come back and the good news is you are not HIV positive. The bad news is you have tested positive for hepatitis C". I did not know what hepatitis C was and I asked him to explain. He told me that it was a blood disorder that attacks the organs. He said it can be passed on through drug misuse or through a blood transfusion. I told him I had never used drugs in my life and that I had had a blood transfusion. He wrote down all the details of my transfusion and I remember he said that hepatitis C can lay dormant for 30 years.

10. I was given no other information about the infection. I was referred to Doctor Jones who was the head of the infectious disease department.
11. I was given information about hepatitis C and cirrhosis of the liver but I don't believe I was given adequate information to help me understand and manage the infection.
12. I believe I was told about my infection as soon as it was confirmed.
13. I was told by Doctor Jones and Sister Marie Murray (Senior Clinical Nurse Specialist) about the seriousness of my hepatitis C and cirrhosis and that it was a life limiting condition.
14. They advised me not to share razors or toothbrushes as hepatitis C can be passed on through blood contact. They also advised me of the small risk of the infection being passed on through intercourse.

### **Section 3. Other infections**

15. As a result of the hepatitis C infection caused by the blood transfusion, I developed severe cirrhosis of the liver, oesophageal varices that require regular bonding, abdominal ascites and e-coli sepsis.

**Section 4. Consent**

16. I do not know if I was tested for hepatitis C without my knowledge or consent in the past, but after attempting to give blood at a routine blood bank in the 90's I was told that I could not do so as I had a blood transfusion in 1982. With this information why was I not tested for hepatitis C, HIV and other conditions that resulted from infected blood, but no tests or information was given to me. As I had no knowledge of these infections my life continued as normal until 2013 when I became seriously ill due to the damage to my liver caused by 30 years of having the hepatitis C virus.

**Section 5. Impact**

17. The illness was debilitating both physically and mentally, increasingly so over time, I was unable to go back to work I was so fatigued.

18. When I left the hospital, I was referred to a liver consultant, Dr Jones. I was also seen by a specialist nurse her name was Sister Marie Murray.

19. Dr Jones explained to me what hepatitis C was. She told me about the risks of passing it on to others through blood to blood contact. I remember she told me to be careful when shaving and also to not share toothbrushes. She also explained that the infection could be passed on through sexual intercourse. She told me to be careful and use protection.

20. Dr Jones informed me that there was no cure for my infection. She said there were testing a new treatment but it was very expensive. I remember she said it cost around £30,000 for this treatment. She said I would have to be committed to the course of treatment. She did explain to me that the treatment had bad side-effects. She explained that the side-effects were, itchy skin, fatigue, nausea, diarrhoea and depression. Nothing she could have said could have prepared me for

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the reality of this treatment. I agreed to the treatment as I thought if there is a chance I could be cured, get my life back on track, it was a chance I was willing to take. Dr Jones encouraged me to give the treatment a try as if it got rid of the infection it would stop my liver being damaged any further.

21. Hepatitis C had damaged my liver, thus leading to multiple complications and conditions that resulted from the infection (see paragraph 15 in How Infected). There were no further medical complications or conditions that resulted from the infection. The treatment was offered to me by Dr Jones. I did not face any obstacles in accessing this treatment.
22. I was told that my treatment was the only one available. I was not made aware that there were any other treatments available.
23. My treatment consisted of daily injections of interferon. I had to self-inject this substance into my stomach. I also had to take 4 tablets a day, two in the morning and two at night. The tablets were called ribavirin. The treatment was for a six-month period.
24. Nothing, Dr Jones had said could have prepared me for the debilitating effects of this treatment. My mother had a caravan GRO-B on the GRO-B coast. I decided I would go there, whilst I was taking the treatment. Almost immediately from starting this treatment I became a different person. Physically, I suffered with extreme weight loss. When I started the treatment I was 13.5 stone, by the end I was under 12 stone. My skin was extremely itchy all over. I was extremely fatigued, I could not get to sleep at night. Mentally, I became very depressed. I was sat on my own in the caravan for 4 months feeling really ill. I was in a very dark place and often felt like I did not want to go on living. It was the darkest time in my life.
25. After the failure of the first course of treatment, I then received a

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second course of treatment (Harvoni and Ribiviron) this had the same if not worse side effects as the first course. At the blood test taken 12 weeks after the course had finished I found out that this had also failed. I then went on to do a third course of treatment (epclusa and ribiviran). This treatment seems to have been successful and the hepatitis virus was undetected at the 12 week blood test. Although the hepatitis C virus has gone the damage to my liver is irreversible and leaves me with numerous complications for what is left of my life.

26. I do believe my infected status caused my cirrhosis, varices, depression and all together my life limiting condition. As far as dental care is concerned, I have avoided going to the dentist for any treatment as I would have to declare I had hepatitis C and it is not a subject I want to talk about. I do not believe I have been to the dentist since my diagnosis.
27. The impact of being infected with hepatitis C was profound. Physically, I became a shell of my former self. I lost so much weight and was physically tired all the time. Mentally, I was very depressed, my illness may be unable to work. I had to give up the job I loved. I lost everything as a result of losing my job, I couldn't pay the mortgage and eventually my home was repossessed. My long-term relationship of 10 years broke down. All in all, my life was a total mess because of my infection. I became very withdrawn, almost recluse like, as I did not want anyone to know about my condition. I had a large, loving, close-knit family but I withdrew away from them.
28. I was aware of the stigma surrounding hepatitis C. This is the main reason I withdrew away from my family I was too embarrassed and ashamed even though it was through no fault of my own. I stopped socialising with friends. If I was ever in the pub and anything came on the TV regarding hepatitis C, someone would always say, "He must be a right druggie". I felt it best to keep away. Even to this day, my family and friends don't know about my infection.

29. I did not tell my family I had contracted hepatitis C because of the stigma so my infected status did not impact on their lives. My mother clearly knew I was ill and did keep asking me what was wrong with me. I just kept saying I was waiting for results of tests. My family must have been concerned about me because I avoided seeing them.
30. As a result of being infected I lost my job. I couldn't physically do it any more, I was too exhausted. I was a long distance lorry driver and bringing home between £700 and £800 a week. I loved my job and I was a hard-working man. To be unable to work affected me terribly. I became anxious and stressed and extremely depressed. Without my wages I was unable to pay my mortgage. I had no insurance to cover my mortgage and ultimately my house was repossessed and I became homeless. Fortunately, my girlfriend at the time allowed me to move in with her.
31. In between 2013 and 2016, my friend asked me if I wanted to work for him. I agreed as I was utterly miserable doing nothing and on disability benefits. The job involved driving a 50 tonne dumper truck up in the Highlands. It was clearing the road for the wind turbines. I only managed to work for two months. My ankles swelled up and I couldn't even get my boots on. I clearly was not fit to work and resigned myself to living on benefits.

#### **Section 6. Treatment, care, support**

32. I did not face any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining medical treatment as a consequence of being infected with hepatitis C.
33. I was not offered any counselling or psychological support in relation to me being infected with hepatitis C, I do not know if such support was available.



**Section 7. Financial assistance**

34. I cannot really remember how and when I discovered there was financial assistance for people who had been given infected blood or blood products. I think I read something about it. I know I discussed it with the specialist nurse, Sister Marie Murray, at the haematology department.
35. In 2016, I received a payment of £20,000 from the Skipton fund. On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016, I received a further payment of £50,000. I also receive £6,700 every three months from the Scottish government.
36. I remember initially filling in a lot of forms from the Skipton fund. I know it took me a long time to fill them in and send them off.
37. I received a letter from the Skipton fund to say that I had been refused financial assistance because I could not prove it had been the blood transfusion that had caused me to be infected with hepatitis C. This was due to my records reportedly having been destroyed. I told Sister Marie Murray about this and she said she would look into it. A few weeks later at a routine appointment, Sister Murray told me that a colleague of hers had found evidence that I had had a blood transfusion. I signed the form and she sent it away, weeks later I received my first payment. I can give no other details than that. I signed the form and she sent it off.
38. I do not remember if there were any preconditions imposed on the making of an application for financial assistance.
39. I do not know about any other trusts or funds available regarding financial assistance. The money I have received I am grateful for however, it does not compensate for my loss of earnings or ill-health.

Section 8. Other issues

40. I do ☐ NR want to remain anonymous in this enquiry.

41. My main questions are:

1. After I received the contaminated blood why was I never told of the risk/chance of me being infected.
2. Who or what authorities made the decision to withhold the information from patients about the infected blood.
3. Where are my medical records regarding the transfusion and why have they disappeared.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

**GRO-B**

Dated

15/2/19