

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN2449001

Dated: 18 February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide the statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 12th December 2018. 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 1961 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am aged 58. I live in the north of Northern Ireland not very far from the GRO-B

2. I am the sister of GRO-B:A and GRO-B:D
GRO-B:D A tragically died on the GRO-B 2002 at the age of 39.
My brother D also tragically died as a result of his infection from infected blood in 1995.

3. I come from a large family. **A** my brother was younger by two years. Then came my sister **GRO-B** then **GRO-B** then **D** then **GRO-B** then **GRO-B** then **GRO-B** then **GRO-B** and **GRO-B**

2. How infected

1. **A** suffered from severe Haemophilia. As a young child he missed lots of school because of this. He would suffer from bleeds in his joints and what, for others, might be minor cuts and bruises, for him they had to be treated seriously. He had problems with a swollen knee and could not bend his right knee.
2. He would sometimes go to the local hospital in **GRO-B** which is called Altnagelvin. If it was more serious, and also for regular check ups, he would attend the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast.
3. Over the years he was dealt with at the Royal Victoria by a number of doctors but the principal one in respect of his care was Doctor Elizabeth Mayne.
4. In the 1970s the blood product being used on **A** was Factor 8. Initially my parents were trained to administer Factor 8 to him. Although **A** started to do it then himself as he became older.
5. There was never any suggestion that there was a risk or problems associated with the Factor 8.
6. I now know from his medical records that **A** appeared to be diagnosed with HIV Positive in 1983. I believe **D** was diagnosed at around the same time.
7. I am not aware of any counselling or support given to my brothers. They had to deal with all this themselves. They did not tell us at the time.

8. It was not until many years later, in May 1999 that **A** was diagnosed with having Hepatitis C. He found out his diagnosis during a spell at the Royal Victoria Hospital. **D** also knew he had Hepatitis C.

3. Other Infections

1. I am not aware of any other infections which my brothers may have had other than HIV and Hepatitis C as a result of being given infected blood products.

4. Consent

1. I believe that my brothers were treated and given contaminated blood without their consent or knowledge. I do not believe they were given proper warnings.
2. On the 12th February 1985 Doctor Mayne wrote to my parents suggesting the whole family should be tested. It was arranged for us all to travel down to Belfast a few weeks later.
3. We understood that they were testing us to see if we were carriers of Haemophilia. There was no suggestion that it was for any other reason. At that stage we had no idea that there had been a diagnosis of HIV with my brothers. We only found out recently, when we had access to **A**'s medical records, that what they were really doing was testing us for HIV.

5. Impact

1. My brothers were diagnosed with HIV it was considered to be an unenviable death sentence. Terrifying adverts were being run on TV and on the radio warning about the dangers. Sufferers from HIV were stigmatised, regarded as authors of their own misfortune. HIV was associated with gay sex, promiscuity, drug abuse and the life.

2. Living in a rural **GRO-C** community in Northern Ireland it must have been terrible to be living with such a secret. My brothers must have greatly feared the diagnosis leaking out and people coming to the wrong conclusions.
3. In the early 1990s **A** started to live with his girlfriend/ partner. Although they had their ups and downs they were together until he died.
4. **D** tragically died on the **GRO-B** 1995. We were not aware at that time that he had been diagnosed with HIV and that was the cause of his death. At the time **D** had died of a Brain Tumour. I am very upset and will never forgive those responsible.
5. **D** had a very distressing, lingering death. **D** took very ill in **GRO-B** 1995. He was rushed to Royal Victoria Hospital. His condition went down hill rapidly. He would go home sometime at weekends. I recall him getting marked out for radium treatment. I remember him being isolated in the Ward. I didn't get to see him much as I was pregnant. He passed away on **GRO-B** 1995.
6. At his funeral **D** had a closed casket. This is very unusual. In our community the funeral wake is a very prominent part of the grieving process. It is usual to have an open casket so that you can see the deceased. Not having this was very distressing. I knew at the time why his casket wasn't open. I was very upset as I never got to see my brother to say goodbye. This was a very emotional time for me, my husband had also walked out. So I had to deal with knowing my brother was going to die and here I was pregnant so it was a lot to cope with. 1995 is a year that will stay with me for a long time.
7. **A** went into self destruct not long after **D**'s death. Before that he was a social drinker but he took to more heavy drinking. I now know of course that he was probably aware that he himself faced a similar future to **D**. That **A** had a death sentence now hanging over him.

8. In 1999 I now know that **A** was told that his girlfriend was HIV Positive. He must have assumed that he had infected her. That must have been a terrible thing for **A**. He must have been plagued with guilt. He was in a very dark place and his drinking deteriorated further. He was admitted to hospital because of this and at the same time his girlfriend had to go to hospital in Dublin.
9. I was at the hospital with my parents when Dr Elizabeth Mayne spoke to them. She told us about **A**. It was same for **D**.
10. I was shocked and very upset. I find it difficult to comprehend. I assume that **A** was going to die now as well. I was violently sick after leaving the hospital. I had mixed emotions of anger and fear of the unknown as to what lay ahead for us as a family.
11. **A** managed to initially get over things and return home. He was living in a housing association house, he shared with his girlfriend, where he could be close to all of us. That meant we could keep a close eye on him.
12. Unfortunately he remained prone to binge drinking. I now understood why that was. I now know that he had HIV and he believed he was living under a death sentence.
13. **A** tragically died on the **GRO-B** 2002. Although he had been in poor mental and physical health, it still came as great shock with no pre warning. In a way, I was relieved by this. He did not suffer the long terrible decline of his brother.
14. He was found dead at about 5pm on that day, by his partner in their house.
15. I of course knew that HIV must have played a part in his death and also Hepatitis C. However the death was referred to as Pneumonia being the cause of death. As is customary a two day wake was organised for **A**. As with **D** **A**'s casket was closed. A photograph of him was put on top of the casket.

16. People did not think anything of this because the years before his death **A** had made it clear that he wanted the casket closed. He would say that he did not "want anyone looking" at him. We of course know that he was fully aware that he would have to have a closed casket because of his HIV infection and he had been preparing a way for this by making such comments.
17. I found the closed casket very distressing. It meant that you could not actually see him. It separates you from the actual person being buried.
18. I greatly miss my brother. We were very close in age. We were best of friends as well as being brother and sister.
19. I attended a Preliminary Inquiry Hearing in late September in London with my family. I found it a very emotional and upsetting experience. It also caused all of us to worry about infections and in particular Hepatitis. **GRO-C**
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20. My brothers **D** and **A** in particular, never had a chance. They didn't have a life. They were given death sentences.
21. I have suffered from depression and was on medication prescribed by my doctor. I also went and paid for counselling to help me cope. Still to this day I have difficulty trying to cope. To think that doctors we trusted knew all along what they were doing to my beloved brothers. How could anyone be so cruel? They have murdered my brothers and broken the family chain.
22. In respect of my previous treatment for HIV, which I did not know at the time, back in 1985 I attended a heart clinic and I was asked about attending haematology clinic. I wasn't aware this would show up on my records as when I was getting tested for HIV/hepatitis C. I was told this would be confidential.

6. **Financial Assistance**

1. **D** received a pay out of I think £20,000 resulting as litigation in the late 1980s or early 1990s. I am not aware of him or **A** obtaining any further payments during their lifetime.

7. **Other Issues**

1. I am concerned that **A**'s medical records are not complete. As a family we have obtained his records and have seen that they have started a file marked "file 6". What has happened to the first 5 files?
2. My two brothers were, in my view, murdered. I'm determined to fight for justice for my 2 brothers.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed..

GRO-B

Dated.....18/2/19.....