

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN2781001

Exhibits: WITN2781002-4

Dated: March 2019

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** My date of birth is **GRO-B** 1948. I live at **GRO-B** I married my second wife, **GRO-B** in 1992. I have one daughter, **GRO-B** who was born in 1999.
2. I make this statement on behalf of my deceased wife, **GRO-B: W** **W** was born on **GRO-B** 1954. She died on **GRO-B** 1987. She was 33 years old. She died from AIDS as a result of receiving a contaminated donor kidney.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my wife's 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

4. My mother and father lived in Dundee and I was working in Cambridge when my mum passed away. My dad visited his sister in **GRO-B** Lancashire

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and that is where I met **W**. She lived next to my Aunt. We met in 1976 and we were married on **GRO-B** 1978.

5. At the time **W** was a data processor with the Ministry of Health. When I met **W** I knew she was having problems with her kidney. She was suffering from renal failure. Whilst she was not having treatment at the time she had very regular checkups at The Withington Hospital under Dr Ackrill.
6. One day we went for a check up and we were told that she had to go on dialysis that day and that she had to have an immediate operation on her wrist to enable access for the dialysis tubing. This was around May 1984; she was immediately put on the transplant list.
7. In September 1984 we received a telephone call at home and **W** was told that there was a kidney available for her. A donor had come about far quicker than we had imagined so we immediately rushed to Manchester Royal Infirmary.
8. We were told that there is a danger with any operation but there was no mention whatsoever about HIV or the possibility of any infection arising from the donor kidney. We were told that the kidney was an almost perfect match and the surgery went ahead without a problem.
9. I remember the morning after the surgery when I visited **W** in hospital she looked absolutely fantastic; a totally different person. She looked well. We were both so happy.
10. However, **W** had been infected through the renal transplant via the donor. She was given the kidney of an 18 year old road accident victim. He had been involved in a police pursuit and had been seriously injured in a road traffic accident. In a bid to save his life the doctors had given him massive blood transfusions but tragically a unit of the blood given to him was contaminated with HIV. I attach Exhibit WITN2781002 a copy of the letter from the hospital.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I am not aware that [W] contracted any other infection apart from HIV.

Section 4. Consent

12. Whilst [W] had given consent for the transplant to take place I do not think she was aware of the fact that her blood was being tested for HIV and other infections.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

13. We were so happy after the transplant and the fact that [W] could live a normal life now without dialysis. My dad was so happy too and even though he had lung cancer and was extremely ill he wanted to see her before he died and visited her in hospital.

14. [W] was fine for a week or two. She then began to get high temperatures, and was extremely fatigued. She was very lethargic. One day one of the doctors took me to one side and said that it appeared that the kidney had come with a flu like virus and that it would have to be treated with daily medication.

15. However, the medication did not help her; she did not appear to get better. Her body had accepted the transplant with the help of anti rejection drugs but she was not well. She was losing weight rapidly. I remember when I visited my doctor I told him about the amount of weight that [W] had lost in such a short time. I remember the doctor being quite rude and saying to me abruptly that it was impossible for someone to lose that amount of weight in that time. I had to leave quickly so that I did not lose my temper. He rang me up later and apologised for his remarks.

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16. I had to take **W** back to the hospital many times and after a while they decided to do a few more tests; it was then they found the HIV. They had not told us that they were testing for this. She was very thin. They were just talking about all the weight she had lost. This was approximately 18 months after the transplant operation.

17. The hospital was very good at the time. I was told that I could phone the hospital if she got a chest infection or anything like that and that I could bring her straight in. This happened four or five times. It was a round trip of 120 miles. At the time I was working on the docks on a dredger but my employers were very good to me and they gave me a job on shore in case **W** needed me.

18. Whenever we went to the hospital they always kept her in, she had numerous chest infections and pneumonia.

19. **W** was not very happy. She made me promise that I would find out what was wrong. I tried my best but it seemed that the doctors did not know. All we got was excuse after excuse.

20. When they told us that **W** had been infected with HIV the doctors said that we could not tell anybody because of the stigma attached to it. This included our family so we didn't tell anyone. However, during this time she was back and forth to the hospital and her family began to think that she had cancer. We had to stop that rumour and **W** told her mother.

21. When **W** had been given the news that she had been infected with HIV, I wasn't with her. Her brother had taken her to the hospital that time. She was given this news without me. I remember that she came back and said I had to get tested straight away because she had HIV. She was tested positive for HIV on 31st July 1986.

22. According to everyone at that time HIV was a disease only associated with homosexuals. I was saying and thinking that I had not done anything like that.

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I felt guilty. I went straight to the hospital in Manchester and the doctor took blood from me and said that the results would normally take a while but they had the laboratory on alert to test straight away and my results came back very quickly. They said I was negative and I remember saying "thank God".

23. Even then, they came out with some funny things. They were worried news would break out. I happened to say to one of the doctors that we had come in for a life saving operation and had come out with a death sentence. Even at that stage we were not told where the HIV had come from.

24. We were later led to believe that the donor himself had HIV; we were not told about the HIV infected unit of blood given to him to try and save his life. This went on for a good while until we told the consultants that we were going to get legal advice regarding medical negligence. Then we were informed of the unit of blood that the donor was given that contained HIV but that no checks for this virus were available at that time. However, in reports obtained after **W** died it states that not only **W** but the donor and myself were checked for HIV virus prior to her transplant

25. It was only later on that we were told that in order to try and save his life the patient was given 15 or 20 units of blood and one of those units contained HIV. We asked where the blood had come from and we were told that it came from America. We were very saddened. The donor who had died had given his heart, liver and two kidneys for transplant and all four recipients died. **W** knew the person who received the donor's other kidney. They died within weeks of **W**

26. We did not understand what the HIV meant; it appeared nobody did. Nothing was explained to us.

27. We were given no advice whatsoever. It appeared that they were not worried at all about me or **W** they just wanted to know how to educate their staff on this new disease.

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28. There was no treatment they could give [W] they just carried on prescribing the anti rejection drugs. There was no medication on the market apparently to help. [W] was made redundant from the Ministry of Health on grounds of ill health. She was an extremely clever lady.
29. At the time the government had started with adverts on the television with regard to AIDS and the tombstone adverts. It was thought of as being a homosexual disease at that time and was called "the gay plague". A few stars in America had died at this point. I remember [W] saying one time that she was as famous as Starsky and Hutch because someone closely related to them had died from AIDS via a blood transfusion.
30. [W] and I were never warned of any danger of infection prior to the transplant.
31. It hit [W] really hard and it affected us greatly. Psychologically she was traumatised too as when she had been put on the transplant list the doctor was asking about her family. She said she had 3 brother and 3 sisters and her mother and father. She was asked at the time if one would donate a kidney and she said she was not sure but would ask. She asked and nobody came forward. That upset her greatly. It was on her mind all the time. Her thoughts were different towards her family from then on.
32. I went into the hospital to see her one night. It really upset me to see her distressed. She had written two letters to me, she knew something was going to go wrong so she was trying to get off her chest how she felt about her family. She had written that there were 16 kidneys in her family for testing and not one would come forward. She found that really hard to accept; especially that her own mum and dad had not offered.
33. When her HIV was diagnosed and she found out it had come with the kidney she relayed it back to someone from her family who could have given her a healthy kidney. This had a huge impact on her. When they found out about the HIV not one said that they were sorry they had not come forward to help.

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34. In [GRO-B] 1987, towards the latter stage of [W]'s life, I was still working full time combining this with visits to the hospital and looking after my wife. I had heard about what the AIDS virus did. The doctor told me he wanted to see me and he told me there was no chance she would survive. I made Dr Ackrill promise that it would not go that far and that he would help [W]. He shook my hand. [W] had injections that were on a timer and she knew herself that she was going to die. It was absolutely terrible but at the end she gave me a big smile.
35. [W] died on [GRO-B] 1987. At first I was given a death certificate with cause of her death as being HIV. However, this death certificate was then changed and I exhibit at WITN2781003 the one that was issued following the Inquest. I do not have a copy of the first death certificate.
36. [W]'s body was taken to an undertaker in [GRO-B]. I received a call from the police in [GRO-B] (to say that the Chief of Police was concerned) and a constable was sent to my house to take a statement from me regarding the build up to [W]'s death. The next day I got a phone call from the registrar to say that the funeral would be held up and that [W] was being taken back to Wittington Hospital. I really did not understand what was happening; I had just lost my wife. By this time I got the impression that [W]'s family's attitude had started to change towards me.
37. After [W] died an Inquest was held. A verdict of misadventure was given. I was told by the Coroner that if I had any questions I could ask the witness Dr Ackrill. I asked how long [W] would have survived if she had just continued with dialysis. I was told that she could have gone on for a few more years. I asked if this had happened before with HIV infection and the Coroner said not to their knowledge. After the Inquest Dr Ackrill pulled me aside. I think he had had enough of not telling the truth. He told me that the same thing had happened in France a few years before [W]'s transplant in 1984, but I could not repeat this to anyone else. It was like the Health Authorities did not want any negative information going public and just wanted it covered up.

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38. **W** asked me to get to the bottom of it and to find out the truth and I felt I let her down by not taking things further. There had been no treatment at the time. It was **W**'s biggest dream that they would find something to help her before it was too late.

39. All my family came for the funeral from Scotland. They were completely ignored by **W**'s family; we were shunned. They gave us the cold shoulder and I think it was because I reminded them of their guilt for not having helped **W**. I paid for everything for the funeral. One of my brothers got annoyed and wanted to stay with me to support me but I was worried that he would lose his temper with **W**'s family and so I asked him to go back home. One of our best friends said that **W**'s family's behaviour was unforgiveable.

40. Her family made my life a living hell after **W** died. I do not know whether this was because of their guilt for not helping **W** when they could. Before she passed **W** decided she did not want to be buried, she wanted to be cremated and she wanted her ashes scattered on the beach at Luss (Loch Lomond Scotland) which we loved. However after **W** had died her family nagged and nagged me to let them have her ashes because they wanted a memorial. I thought it might ease tension and get things back on an even keel. They put so much pressure on me that I said they could take the ashes and I did not want anything to do with it. They put up a memorial stone and a few months later I went to see it. They had inscribed on the stone "in memory of our daughter **W**". It was like she had not been married at all and that I did not even exist.

41. This really upset me and had such a profound effect.

42. After **W** died I struggled to cope. I lost my job. I went straight back to live in Scotland. Fortunately in 1991 I met my now wife **GRO-B** in Dundee. If it was not for her I do not know how I would have coped. She is my "Angel".

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43. I bought a cottage in [GRO-B] and kept busy with renovations. During that time there was a job advertised in kitchen and bathroom design. The guy took me on straight away and I ended up being the manager. However, things started getting me down again and I was thinking about the past. I stuck at it as long as I could. I went to part time and did odd jobs until I officially retired 6 years ago. My health has not been very good.
44. The silver lining in my life has been my daughter who was born in 1999. She is now in her third year at Edinburgh University [GRO-B] I live to make sure she is okay. She is marvellous.
45. I was eventually diagnosed with Post traumatic stress disorder which has left me with a massive phobia of hospitals. I cannot ever enter a hospital for treatment that I now require. I have to have a bowel operation but I have refused to go into hospital. I have tried but every time I go onto a ward I just see [W] in all the beds.
46. I had a heart attack late last year and I was rushed into hospital but I did not know anything about it at the time. Two days later I had to be discharged because of my anxiety. The doctors were really good with me as they had read my notes and knew about [W] and my hospital phobia. They treated me from home and when I had to see a doctor at the hospital they would arrange to see me in an office.
47. Three years ago I took my wife and daughter on holiday to Blackpool. I dropped them off at the hotel and decided that I would have a run up to [GRO-B] to see [W]'s family. I called in on [W]'s older sister [GRO-B] I was welcomed with open arms. This was on a Wednesday and she invited me back on Friday with [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] to meet the rest of the family. When I went back on Friday most of the family were there and they were happy to see me but it was not the same. I just wanted to get out of there. It was obvious that they still lived with the guilt. They never mentioned [W] once. I have not seen or phoned them since. They have never attempted to keep in touch with me.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

48. I had counselling 3 or 4 years ago but I could not handle it. It brought everything back to me and it did not help. My wife is a Godsend; without her things for me would have been a lot different. I still have bad dreams and nightmares approximately 3 or 4 times a week. This has an impact on my sleep and I will wake up crying, screaming and sweating.

49. **W** prayed that treatment would be developed to help her but it did not come in time. We did not receive any support following her diagnosis. It seemed that doctors did not know how to react only that they wanted to keep it quiet and pushed under the carpet.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

50. I promised **W** that I would find out what happened. In 1992 I was listening to a programme on Radio 4 and it was something to do with people infected with HIV who were entitled to money from the Government. I stopped the car and initially thought that the Government were accepting liability but I was wrong. I phoned a solicitor in Manchester and they got back to me and said that I was entitled but that I had to sign a waiver to say I would not take any further action against the Health Authorities. I said at the time this was alright because I was so fed up with not having anything. I had lost everything when **W** died; a good job and my house. The cheque was for £52,000. That money I got bought the cottage that we now live in and I have been doing it up ever since. I think the payment was from the Ministry of Health. That is the only help we have been offered. The payment helped me gain some pride back in myself.

51. I have received no other financial assistance but giving this statement and going through this process is helping me to get matters off my chest.

Section 8. Other Issues

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52. A few years later I found out in Scotland that they had heat treated products 3 years before they did in England. I do not understand why they were not doing it in England. I drew the conclusion that it was all to do with finances.

53. I have sympathy for homosexuals because they were getting all the blame for AIDS. People, including **W** and myself were told lie after lie.

54. I felt sorry for Dr Ackrill too because I got the feeling he could not say too much. Dr **GRO-D** and Dr **GRO-D** were worried and concerned about the public finding out during previous Hospital consultations with **W** and myself.

55. I refer to exhibit WITN2781004 which is a wonderful photograph of my beautiful late wife and me on our wedding day. I am heartbroken. I feel the medical profession in this country and overseas condemned my wife to death. They thought AIDS would go away but it did not. I do not blame the doctors who carried out the transplant; they were just following guidelines but the people at the top of the medical profession should have known better. They were ignorant, complacent and they destroyed my dreams and robbed me of a wonderful wife I adored.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

56. I do **GRO-B** wish to remain anonymous and **GRO-B**
GRO-B

57. I am able to give oral evidence to the Inquiry if required but I am recovering from a heart attack.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed. **GRO-B**

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Dated. 24-03-2019

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MEDICAL SUMMARY

(This summary is not intended to be exhaustive but sets out key points in the records relevant to the Statement)

This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my wife's full medical records.