

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN4867001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 07 April 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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 18 March 2021.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B 1956 and my address is GRO-B

2. I am a self employed painter & decorator and I live alone. I have been married once between the ages of 19 and about 26. We had 2 children but sadly one died not long after her birth. I also have 2 other adult children from a subsequent relationship. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C ('HCV'), particularly the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me, my family and our lives together.

3. I am a diagnosed dyslexic and wrapped up with that is that I have a severely poor 'digital span'. This means I struggle with numbers generally and this included dates and times, consequently my memory concerning events and when they happened is very poor.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I grew up in South West London. When I was aged 13, around 1971, I was tripped up by a girl and landed on a broken glass bottle. My left hand was severely cut and blood was spurting out of my hand.
5. I was immediately rushed to GRO-B in Roehampton. I was told that I had cut the tendons in my left hand. I was struggling to move my fingers.
6. Around a week or so later I returned to GRO-B for an operation. I cannot remember the exact nature of the operation except that it was to repair the tendons in my left hand. I can recall a male nurse who used to wash me whilst I was staying in the hospital. He was noticeably effeminate and 'camp', and being the age I was this stuck in my mind when he was washing me. I should stress that he did nothing wrong but I do remember that he said to me that I needed to have blood. Apart from this, all I can remember was staying in the hospital for around a week after the operation.
7. After the operation, life went on as normal. I continue to live mainly around London. I left school aged 14 and worked with my Dad as a painter and decorator. I also trained as a butcher's boy for a year or so before returning to work with my Dad.
8. Around age 19 I went to college and began lecturing in painting and decorating at GRO-B and GRO-B. From my mid teens, I used drugs. This mainly involved hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD, magic mushrooms, as well as marijuana and amphetamines.

9. I injected heroin on two or three occasions only. I only ever used the same needle once and I never shared it with others. In those days you could buy hypodermic syringes from some chemists.
10. When I was aged 21 I went to Hackney Hospital and asked to be sent rehab. I was a functioning addict in that I continued to work despite my drug use. I was sent to **GRO-B** where I remained for 3 to 4 months but left when the therapy involved talking about my baby that had died and so I left. I have realised since that this was a mistake and that it would have done me a lot of good to have spoken about this then.
11. I left rehab and didn't use drugs again. I divorced my wife when I was aged 26 and I soon found a new partner. I had two children with this long-term partner. She became physically abusive to the children and I decided, after receiving further therapy, to leave her.
12. I wanted to check my sexual health before embarking on a new relationship, so I visited my GP for a number of tests. I was surprised to learn around a week later that I had tested positive for HCV genotype 1, which I believe was in the mid 1990s. I was told this by my GP face-to-face in a rather blunt manner.
13. Around a week after this, I heard a few rumours about HCV so I decided to return and see my GP Dr **GRO-D** a lady doctor at **GRO-B** GP Practice. Dr **GRO-D** told me that my HCV was terminal. This affected me enormously and I became paranoid that I had given it to my ex-partner and my children.
14. I was given very little information about HCV. My GP said that I was only the second person she had seen who was HCV positive. She said that I had taken drugs and implied that it must have come from that. She did not consider the possibility of me receiving a blood transfusion during my operation at **GRO-B**

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15. I was referred to the hepatology department at St George's Hospital, Tooting. I was put under the care of Dr Wandsborough-Jones around a year after my diagnosis. At this time I had no obvious symptoms of the HCV, I was continuing to work and I was also practising martial arts.
16. I recall that I had two liver biopsies, though I cannot remember the outcome of these. I explicitly remember the second liver biopsy causing me a great deal of pain, and I had blood pouring out of my side during the biopsy. Apparently, they had nicked a blood vessel. I still occasionally feel pain my right side as a result of this.
17. I was not offered treatment for HCV until around 2000 or 2001. I had a number of mental health problems at that time and Dr Wandsborough-Jones did not feel that I was ready to start the HCV treatment. I took a friend of mine with me to see him and we managed to persuade Dr Wandsborough-Jones to allow me to begin the treatment.
18. I started a 12 month course of interferon and ribavirin soon afterwards. I experienced no side-effects initially, except that my energy levels were down. This lasted for 6 months or so until I was told that I had to cut my dosage of interferon down for a week or two, due to something about my red blood cells.
19. As a result, I was told to take half of my normal dose of interferon. I injected this half dose, as instructed. I then used the other half the following week, I am not sure that I should have done this, it instantly made me feel awful. It was far worse than flu and I experienced severe aches and pains. My ex-partner took me to St George's Hospital at 6am and they said they were unable to do anything about it.
20. This lasted for 4 days until I saw the specialist at the hepatology department at St George's. Inexplicably, I had an almost spiritual experience whereby I was tingling from my toes all the way up to my hands and I felt elated and euphoric. When the doctor finally came in to

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see me I said that I was fine and I left. However, I did feel rough again for about another two weeks.

21. I had to summon up a lot of courage to take the next dose of interferon after this experience. I did take the interferon again and I was able to complete the 12 month course of treatment.

22. During my treatment I went to St George's Hospital every Monday for tests. They were not especially informative about the results of these tests and I had no real idea whether the treatment was working. Despite this I felt desperate to complete the course and clear my HCV.

23. After completing the course, the hospital said they would ring me. I waited for a week until I was told by phone that it had been successful. This was a massive relief. After this I do not remember returning to the hepatology department at St George's Hospital.

Section 3. Other Infections

24. I do not believe that I received any infections other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent

25. I consented to being tested and treated for HCV.

Section 5. Impact

26. The greatest impact of my HCV infection was being told, wrongly, by my GP that it was terminal. There were a number of aspects that contributed to my mental health issues but the HCV diagnosis and the doctor saying that it was terminal was like the last straw and it tipped me over the edge. I was suicidal. I still have the suicide notes that I wrote to my children in my loft. Thankfully I did not actually attempt suicide, had I done so I would have carried it through.

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27. As I alluded to in the previous paragraph, after the diagnosis I had a mental breakdown. The HCV infection was one of many factors that contributed to this, including the loss of my child that I hadn't dealt with. I was overwhelmed by everything and was admitted to a psychiatric hospital for 5 days owing to my paranoia. I believed that I may have passed on my HCV to my family and I couldn't cope with this.
28. I was unable to work after my mental breakdown and during my course of treatment. The treatment itself did not affect me physically until after 6 months. I am now working again having cleared the HCV and I run a successful painting and decorating business.
29. I have always been comfortable confiding in people about my HCV infection though I have experienced some stigma. This was obvious on two occasions when I told potential sexual partners about my HCV status. After telling them they used to make up excuses not to have sex. I felt a moral obligation to tell any potential sexual partners although this did make them wary of me. I remember Dr Wansborough-Jones telling me that it wasn't possible for me to transmit HCV sexually though I still felt it a duty to tell my partners.
30. With regard to the dentist, I do not know if they treated me differently. They always wore PPE but I don't know if it was more than with other patients. Looking back though, I believe that I may have been kept to the last appointment of the day on occasions. I cannot remember which dental practice this may have been.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

31. I have not faced any difficulty in receiving treatment for my HCV. After my emotional breakdown, my treatment was delayed owing to concerns about the effect the treatment could have on my mental health, though I was eventually offered treatment.

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32. I have not been offered counselling or psychological support in relation to my infection with HCV. I received psychological support for my mental health issues, which were in part a result of my HCV diagnosis but the sessions were not specifically due to my HCV.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

33. I used to attend HCV support groups with the charities

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GRO-B} believe that one of these support groups informed me about the Skipton Fund.

34. I applied to the Skipton Fund but I cannot remember when. I talked to Dr
GRO-D who said that I would not stand a chance because of my previous drug use. I cannot remember the exact outcome of my application except that it was rejected. After this, I shelved it and moved on. I cannot recall when this was.

Section 8. Other Issues

35. I believe that HCV was the catalyst for a lot of my problems. I cannot say for certain whether I had a blood transfusion during my operation at St Mary's Hospital, but I believe that I did and I believe this to be the cause of my HCV infection.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

7/04/2021