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Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN7167001

Exhibits: none

Dated:

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 31 August 2022.

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

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth and address is known to the Inquiry. I am married with five children and I have five grandchildren, which keeps me busy. I currently work as a carer and I previously worked for GRO-B Hospital.
2. I intend to speak about my Hepatitis B ("HBV") infection. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me and the impact it had on my life.
3. I confirm that I am not currently legally represented and that I am happy for the Investigation Team to assist me with my written statement.

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4. I confirm that I have had the option to seek anonymity and the Inquiry's statement of approach has been explained to me. I wish to seek anonymity.
5. I can also confirm that the Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.

Section 2. How Infected

6. In 1978, after giving birth to my second child, I experienced a haemorrhage and was told there was a problem with my uterus which required an operation.
7. I can recall signing a consent form for the operation to have my uterus repaired. When I woke up from the operation, I saw a bag of blood with a drip going into my arm. They explained to me that they needed to give me a blood transfusion because I had lost a lot of blood during the operation. That was all that was mentioned to me about it until years later.
8. Then during the birth of my third child, I was told that the anti-natal clinician at Guy's Hospital had run some routine blood tests and I was informed that a test had returned positive for "Australia antigen". I was told later that day, that this was Hepatitis B. The nurse asked if I had ever received a blood transfusion and that they were trying to understand where I had got the infection from. I was asked if at any point was I unwell with jaundice, and they told me that I contracted it from a blood transfusion. I did not understand the diagnosis and they did not say it was from infected blood, they just said that with blood transfusions sometimes people can contract other illnesses. I was told I would need to be screened regularly and they gave me a diagnosis card for my

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notes. I could also then see on my hospital notes in big yellow writing that I had hepatitis.

9. All I was told was that I should not pass it to anyone else and the way to prevent that is to report it to wherever I go and whatever I did. I was told to tell the hospital or dentist each time that I visited, and so I did that over the following years. Also, that it can pass on through fluids and so I should be careful, and my blood should not come into contact with others. This made me feel as though I had the plague. That was it, and I was not sufficiently informed of the risks attached to hepatitis or how to manage the infection.

10. I went on to have three more children, which I detail later at Section 5, and I went away and lived my life.

11. Due to the lapse of time, when I initially got in touch with the Inquiry, I was somewhat unsure whether I had contracted HBV or HCV. Although I have now become rather certain it was HBV.

Section 3. Other Infections

12. I do not believe I have contracted any other infections as a result of being treated with infected blood.

Section 4. Consent

13. I can recall signing a consent form in relation to the aesthetic that I was administered before my surgery, however, I was not asked if I would consent to the blood transfusion. I understand from speaking with a friend that the form I signed may have given permission to other treatment also. Although, at the time I was not made aware of that.

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Section 5. Impact

14. When I had my fourth child, it was very straight forward. Nothing was said about HBV.
15. However, when I had my fifth child, I was told that a vaccine had been developed to stop a baby from contracting HBV from their mother and that my baby would need this. I consented to him having the vaccine. But I was informed by a friend that it contained blood products and so I refused to consent to the follow up booster.
16. After the birth of my fifth child, I went away and lived my life. Nothing else was ever mentioned to me. I ensured that I attended a special dentist and made sure that I did not come into contact with anyone else's blood.
17. When I told my dentist that I had HBV, he said he could not treat me and I was sent to a specialist. I initially had thought my dentist would put me in a different room, but they said no. It felt like segregation and it did not feel good.
18. Apart from my sister and mother, my family and friends do not know about my hepatitis. My sister only found out through visiting me following childbirth. It was something that did not involve them and I did not see the benefit in telling people.
19. My sister recently recalled when my family would visit me in Greenwich Hospital after giving birth. I was always put into a side room following birth, and my family were required to wear masks and gowns. They initially did not understand why they needed to do this and I believe they were then informed.
20. Although, when I met my partner, I had to explain to him the situation and that I had this thing in my blood that could affect him. It was

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something we had to deal with together and we were given no support. All I had been told was, if I cut myself, I need to run away from people.

21. When I became a Jehovah Witness, learnt that they do not give or take blood, and I found this knowledge really overwhelming. I now carry a card that states "no blood" due to my religious beliefs.
22. My partner and children have never been tested for HBV, and it was never raised when I was diagnosed or at any other point.
23. A few years ago, I thought about what had happened to me and I said to myself, I am going to seek compensation for this as I think it is wrong what was done to me. I got in touch with a law firm and I was told that they could not take my case on because two years had passed since I was infected. I believe that this is how hospitals get away with things because people decide down the line that they wish to seek legal action. At the time, life happened, I was running around working and bringing up children. It did not even occur to me, and years ago taking legal action was not so accessible.
24. I have not experienced any health issues, other than heavy periods. Although, I do not think this is related to HBV, as it runs in my family.
25. Although, HBV affected my whole life as I worried if other people would find out and would not understand, and I would be treated in a certain way. I thought I would not be invited round for tea anymore and that small-minded people would probably say to avoid me as "you could end up with it too".
26. I know that one of my cousin's contracted hepatitis and I worry that it could have been me who infected him. He had hepatitis and he was unwell for a few weeks.

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27. I recently contacted the Hepatitis C Trust and they said that they could not help me. They made me feel like my life had not been affected by hepatitis as I do not have a life-threatening infection such as HCV. Even though, I had told them that I was unsure whether my diagnosis was HCV or HBV, she took the road.
28. Further to this, I spoke with a friend this morning who works in social care and having told her that I have an interview with the Inquiry, she shared some of her views with me. She said if HBV is not a serious illness, then why do those in caring roles need to be vaccinated against it. She said that whoever said HBV is not dangerous is incorrect.
29. I did not know the scale of infected blood until I read an article in the late 1990s stating that people were infected with blood and developed HIV. I then spent ten years worrying about whether I had caught HIV. This was mentally draining for so many years and in particular when I had young children. I, now, no longer worry as it has been forty years and assume I would have known by now.
30. If I could describe it, it was like I was violated through the blood transfusion. It was like being raped, I know that is drastic, but I cannot think of another word. In giving infected blood to someone, you took away everything from them - you changed their life.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

31. In 1999, I applied for a job at GRO-B Hospital and I was told that as part of the onboarding process for the job that I would receive a medical. During the medical they carried out blood testing, and so I told them I have HBV. I was then told that they test for HBV as part of their procedure and everyone is HBV vaccinated. I was tested and it came back that I did not have HBV in my blood. She explained to me that my HBV may have been mild but it has now gone. I was so confused that

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this could happen. I asked her whether this could be because I had genealogical problems, whereby, I was losing so much blood that I could not leave my house for two days. She did not know, but I strongly believe that over the years my blood recycled and naturally cleared itself. I had three really bad years of periods and so I believe during this time I cleared the virus. I was also actively being healthy as I was concerned that I would become anaemic and I drank drinks that would build my blood up.

32. I had no monitoring or testing following my diagnosis. I was never offered treatment to clear the virus and I never heard from a clinician regarding the virus.

33. No counselling support was ever offered to me.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. I contacted EIBSS recently and was told "sorry but for those that fall outside of HIV and HCV, there is nothing we can do, we cannot even register you".

35. In terms of financial support, I have been told that support does not apply to HBV. I believe that support should not only be given to those with life threatening infections, but should also consider other ways in which it has changed someone's life including mentally and socially.

36. People think it is about the money and it is not. The point is that you have been counted and have become part of the Inquiry. It is not about the compensation - it is saying to the person we are really sorry and this should not have happened.

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Section 8. Other Issues

37. I recently heard a gentleman on the news and he said that those people were 'unlucky' to become infected, and as far as I am concerned that shows me that they do not care.

38. I wish for an apology and to find out what happened.

39. Also, it is not about how much compensation. I believe that compensation would say "we are aware of how affected you are and we are sorry".

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

28/12/2022