

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name:

GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN7581001

Exhibits: WITN7581002 -009

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 29 November 2022.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B (previous surname from my first marriage was GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1963 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am married to GRO-B who is a GRO-B and I have two children GRO-B and two step children.
2. I intend to speak about my own HCV infection. In particular, the nature of how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it has had on myself and my family's lives together.

## ANONYMOUS

3. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me.
4. I wish to be anonymous and I do not want my personal information to be known.

### Section 2. How Infected

5. On GRO-B 1990, I gave birth to my son at Forth Park Hospital. It was a very long and distressing labour and I had to have an emergency caesarean. The doctors had not cross matched my blood and I was given a universal donor blood type.
6. I didn't see my new born baby for 2-3 days as I was in intensive care. I lost a lot of blood and was on oxygen, but I do not recall how many pints of blood I was given in the blood transfusion. I was not given any advice or information regarding the risks involved in receiving a blood transfusion.
7. After the birth, I remember one of the nurses coming into me and asking me if I would allow a mother in the same ward, who had lost her baby, to hold mine, but I refused. At the time it seemed very strange that they would want to give my baby to a lady who had lost hers.
8. I recall that the doctor that was responsible for my care at Forth Park was subsequently struck off by the hospital and there was an Inquiry into his conduct.
9. When I was discharged from hospital, I felt horrendous and I was very jaundiced for some time. My mother in law told me that I needed to go and see someone as I was so yellow so I went to see my GP who referred me for blood tests and the results of my liver function test were

## ANONYMOUS

grossly abnormal. I was informed that if the liver function test levels did not come down I would need to be admitted to the infectious diseases unit.

10. The liver function test levels did not come down so I was referred by my GP at the [GRO-B] to the infectious diseases unit at [GRO-B] for an ultrasound and further blood tests.

11. On 17 April 1991 (exhibit **WITN7581002**) I received a letter from the Infectious diseases unit which confirmed that my liver ultrasound and bloods were satisfactory, and that they thought the jaundice was as a result of flu and paracetamol and no further action would be taken. It was said that I had managed to self-clear the infection that caused the jaundice in the time between my son's birth, in [GRO-B] 1990 to the normal liver function test in April 1991.

12. On 31 July 1992 (exhibit **WITN7581003**) I was shocked to receive a letter from my GP informing me that one of the donors that gave the blood I had received in my transfusion had tested positive for HCV and that I required screening for HCV but that they felt there were no long term problems.

13. I was informed by my GP in September 1992 that results from the recent blood tests confirmed that in the past I had been infected with HCV but that the liver function test was now normal and that no long term problems were anticipated.

14. I wanted answers as to how this could happen and so I wrote to the National Blood Transfusion Service asking them about the infected blood sample and how this could have happened.

## ANONYMOUS

15. On 27 January 1993, the National Blood Transfusion Service responded to me (**WITN7581004**) in which they provided information around the procedure for testing for antibodies rather than the virus itself. It was after receiving this letter that my mother suggested that I get some legal advice and so I contacted a firm of lawyers in Glasgow but I was informed that as I had self-cleared the virus I had no case.
16. Both I and my family were increasingly concerned about the HCV as the more we heard about it, the more fear it instilled. We learnt that it was a sleeping disease and could cause liver cancer in the future. My mother was friends with a doctor and he recommended that I make an appointment at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary to see Doctor Hayes, who I was told was an eminent Hepatitis specialist.
17. Doctor Hayes took some blood samples, which I continued to provide every six months until the birth of my second child in **GRO-B** 1997, but he informed me that they were very interested in my case due to the fact that I had self-cleared the infection and HCV was undetectable in my blood.
18. In August 1995, I received a letter (**WITN7581005**) from the office of Doctor Hayes telling me that my liver tests were completely normal and HCV was negative but that they could not entirely exclude continued HCV but it was very encouraging and they would see me again in six months.
19. After that my next two six monthly blood samples came back normal. Both the liver function test was normal and I was HCV negative. I received an invitation from Dr Carol Blair who worked with Doctor Hayes to complete a survey around the quality of life of those with HCV and those that self-cleared the infection.

## ANONYMOUS

20. In February 1997, I was pregnant with my second child and very excited about extending my family, in particular I was excited by the prospect of having a normal childbirth and being able to breastfeed so I was extremely shocked and upset to receive a letter from my consultant obstetrician, Rennie Urquhart (WITN7581006) informing me that I was to be regarded as high risk and that he hoped I would not think I was being treated as a 'leper' but on the lighter note told me I would get my own room.
21. Dr Urquhart attached a letter that he had received from Dr Carol Blair (WITN7581007) that suggested that I was in the 10% of people that had self-cleared the infection or that the HCV was undetectable without a PCR assay test.
22. Further, I received a letter out the blue from the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (WITN7581009) in GRO-B 1997. This was a few weeks before I was due to give birth to my daughter. It advised me that I should, contact my GP if I ever wanted to think about pregnancy. This was extremely alarming considering I was heavily pregnant at that time.
23. My daughter was born at Forth Park hospital in GRO-B 1997 but due to being "high risk" I was not allowed a natural birth and was told not to breastfeed. It was a terribly upsetting experience with all the hospital staff in full PPE. I was also advised that items I had touched would have to be burnt.
24. I was offered no support or further information after my daughter was born and furthermore since the birth of my daughter in GRO-B 1997 I am no longer being monitored and have not given blood samples or had any liver function tests.

**25. Section 3. Other Infections**

26. I do not believe that I have received any infection or infections other than HCV as a result of being given infected blood.

**Section 4. Consent**

27. I do not believe that I have been treated or tested without my knowledge or consent or for the purposes of research.

**Section 5. Impact**

28. Shortly after the blood transfusion and the birth of my son, I recall being absolutely exhausted and had severe jaundice for at least four months.

Persuaded by my mother in law, I went to the GP to identify the cause. I was later told it was Hepatitis, non A, non B.

I realise now that my tiredness was far more extreme than that of a mother with a small baby as I felt so much worse after the first birth and struggled to bond with my first born child having not been able to see him for the initial 2-3 days in hospital.

- 
1. I was so shocked to receive the letter in March 1997 from Dr Urquhart as I had never been informed by anyone that I would be regarded as high risk. I was immediately concerned for my family, my first born child (who I had breastfed) and my unborn second child.
  2. The impact of this news on me was huge, as I was not allowed a natural birth at Forth Park hospital for the birth of my daughter, but had to have another caesarean and during the birth all the hospital staff came in full PPE. Anything I had touched including the bedclothes etc. were burnt and I was not allowed to breastfeed my child.

## ANONYMOUS

3. Up until receiving the letter I had carried on with my life as normal as far as I had been told I had cleared the infection, but finding out I was now defined as high risk had such an impact on my family life. In particular the relationship with my first husband suffered. He left us around a year after the birth of my daughter.
4. I feel that my first husband resented the fact that I could not give birth naturally, or breastfeed and the idea that I might be infectious caused a lot of tension.
5. After my first marriage broke down I continued to work but had to drive 120 miles per day to work, and I had two small children to look after, but thankfully I had support from my parents and people in the local village. The divorce had an impact on all of us as it was a small village and everyone knew everyone else's business, plus my children no longer had their father available.
6. Aside from the hospital staff and the breakdown of my marriage I have not experienced social stigma as I am too scared to tell anyone and to this day, only very few people know including only one friend outside the immediate family. I felt very dirty and that I had something I could spread around and do not want people to treat or look at me any differently.
7. The HCV is a secret I have to continually maintain. I have always felt guilty and recall the difficulty I faced in having to reveal it to my new husband in the early days of our relationship.
8. Receiving the letter telling me I was high risk heightened all of my concerns and worries. I am still holding that secret today in 2022 and to this day I am still embarrassed but my husband is a wonderfully caring man and professionally knows a lot about it all, in light of the field that he works in.

**Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

9. I feel that I have had difficulties with treatment in particular around the time I mentioned previously regarding the birth of my second child. The way I was treated by the surgeons and consultants at Forth Park made me feel extremely uncomfortable, and frightened in having to see everyone dressed in full PPE and hearing they were burning anything I touched.
10. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support.
11. Over the years I have not had any issues with accessing dental or other forms of medical treatment.

**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

12. In January 2004 I wrote to Doctor Hayes at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary asking him if I was eligible for the Skipton Fund payments and asked him to sign the application forms, but in November of that year I received a rejection letter from Keith Foster informing me that as I had self-cleared within six months I was not eligible (**WITN7581008**).
- 
13. I feel the money should have been made available and I am angry to have received a flat no, as they do not know anything about me or the impact that this infection has had on my life or my families, or in fact others in a similar situation.
14. As I have self-cleared the HCV I was informed that I did not need to declare it on financial instruments such as mortgages, but I do however declare it on insurance forms



# ANONYMOUS

## Section 8. Other Issues

15. I still carry the burden of knowing that I was infected with HCV with me. I am extremely concerned that even though they say it is low grade I remain scared for my future.

16. There is a lack of information generally, and up to date information around HCV. I think there needs to be more care and honesty about the tests and information that is available. Being told you have cleared the virus is not in itself enough!

17. I have not had any further tests or monitoring since GRO-B 1997 and this I feel is unacceptable.

18. There needs to be more follow up and more onus on the organisations responsible for the infections caused. I feel there was a distinct lack of joined up thinking and a failure to follow up and keep people updated.

## Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

4th January 2023

Exhibit Number	Description
WITN7581002	Letter from GRO-B 17 April 1991
WITN7581003	Letter from GRO-B 31 July 1992

# ANONYMOUS

WITN7581004	Letter from NBTS 27 January 1993
WITN7581005	Letter from Edinburgh Royal Infirmary 24 August 1995
WITN7581006	Letter from Kirkcaldy Acute Hospitals 7 March 1997
WITN7581007	Letter from Edinburgh Royal Infirmary 27 February 1997
WITN7581008	Letter from Skipton Fund 18 November 2004
WITN7581009	Letter from SNBTS 17 July 1997