

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN2653001

Dated: 25 February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MR **GRO-B**

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 12 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** I am known as **GRO-B** I live at **GRO-B**
GRO-B Cardiff **GRO-B** My date of birth is **GRO-B**
GRO-B 1986.

2. I am making this statement because my Dad, **GRO-B: F** was
infected with HIV and hepatitis C through contaminated blood and died
on **GRO-B** 1997 when I was 10 years old.

2. How Infected

1. My Dad F had severe haemophilia A, also called factor VIII (FVIII) deficiency or classic haemophilia. His condition meant that he had frequent bleeds and emergencies. His joints were sore and swollen.
2. I was a child at the time that all of this happened but I remember Dad having blood products in the fridge and injecting himself. I remember there would be sharp words from Dad if I was being too boisterous as it was really important to protect Dad from injury.
3. My Mum GRO-B will provide more detail about how Dad came to be infected in her witness statement to the Inquiry.

3. Other Infections

1. My Mum GRO-B will provide more detail about other infections Dad suffered in her witness statement to the Inquiry.
2. I am aware from the available medical records that Dad was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in April 1996. He was then admitted to hospital in November 1996 with a chest infection.
3. In January 1997 Dad had Pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP).

4. Consent

1. My Mum GRO-B will provide more detail about consent in her witness statement to the Inquiry.

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5. Impact

1. Because Dad was a haemophiliac, he couldn't do the activities that other Dads might have been able to do. I would see other kids in the neighbourhood playing rugby and football with their Dads and play fighting. Dad would enjoy playing with me, but we had to be extremely careful that he didn't get injured. Dad had a great sense of humour and was fun to be around.
2. I was not oblivious to Dad's illness despite my young age. I remember lots of trips to the hospital and Dad having to spend a lot of time in bed.
3. There was a character on Eastenders called Mark Fowler and I remember his story which was that he had been infected with HIV and was going to die. I remember my Mum and sat me down after this episode of EastEnders and we had a conversation which was very difficult. They told me that this is what was happening to Dad.
4. I was so young I did not know how to process what I was being told. It was very stressful for me at that age. I was told that Dad's illness could not be spoken about. It was very difficult to receive this information about something so serious and personal and not be able to tell any of my friends about it.
5. In fact, I did tell my best friend pretty much straight away despite being told not to. I told Mum that I had told him and that meant that Mum had to go and have a difficult conversation with my best friend's mum. Fortunately, they were really understanding.
6. I don't have much of a memory prior to Dad dying. I have very vivid memories of the night he went into hospital and I was being looked after by a family friend.

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7. I think I must have sensed that this was really serious because I was beside myself constantly crying. I knew something was up and I think that I knew Dad was dying. I remember sitting in my bedroom window praying to God that Dad wouldn't die and that was the last thing I did before I went to bed.
8. The next day Mum told me that Dad couldn't carry on fighting. It was extremely upsetting for both of us in different ways. Mum told me she couldn't sleep that that night knowing that she had to tell me first thing.
9. Not long after Dad died I remember going away to a school camp and wetting the bed every night because I couldn't settle in. I believe the bedwetting was a result of the trauma I had suffered. It was difficult going to school after what had happened.
10. Luckily my best friend knew the full story and was as supportive as a boy that age could be. I was the only boy in my year group that had lost a parent. At one point I had a fight with another boy who had used it to antagonise me.
11. On one occasion my year five teacher insensitively set a piece of homework called, "*When did you last see your father?*". My mum had to go to the school and complain to the Headmistress as I was so upset by this.
12. Everyone at school knew that my Dad had died which meant that people kept saying sorry to me. I understand now that they were trying to be supportive and sympathetic but as a 10-year-old this just served to single me out from the other children.
13. Dad's death had a massive effect on my self-esteem and self-confidence. When I went to high school, I would often hear other children make comments about HIV and AIDS. This contributed to a feeling of social isolation at high school.

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14. I even fell out with my best friend as we went through the normal motions of trying to figure out who to hang out with at secondary school. I was very angry with him at the time as he was the person I had confided in and he was hard to lose as a friend.
15. High school was very difficult for me and I suffered terrible bullying there. I eventually made friends with my best friend again but I felt like an outsider.
16. Mum regretted not having the strength to fight at the time to get me into a better school, but she was still dealing with Dad's death. It was a tough environment and the kids there weren't particularly highly motivated. My high school was not an easy place if you were traumatised or damaged in anyway.
17. I remember confiding in one kid and he pretended to be sympathetic but later on I found out he was just mocking me. This was one of the harder parts of that time for me. I managed to get through school eventually by making a tight knit group of friends and learning how to avoid situations that would result in trauma or confrontation.
18. In hindsight, I look back and I realise that Mum was working several jobs just to be able to provide for me and GR
O-B However, I never felt that I didn't see enough of her. She was always around when I needed her. She was a superwoman in that sense. My friends were also like a second family to me as a teenager.
19. Now I am an adult I have a lot of anger and resentment about the fact that I felt forced as a child to keep what had happened a secret. My Dad died because of what seems to be a scandalous cover-up. That sense of injustice and resentment for what we have lost has factored into my being.

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20. I never actually thought there would be a Public Inquiry. So many people have died it seems obvious now that the Inquiry should have happened much sooner.
21. There has been virtually no recognition or any proper apology or memorial for the thousands of innocent victims killed by contaminated blood. It makes me really angry as I know my Dad worked really hard for the other people affected by it and not just himself.
22. Dad's involvement with the GRO-B meant that I went along to a lot of events and activities and made a lot of friends. It's a very strange feeling when all of your Dad's friends and all of your male role models have died so young and in quick succession of each other.
23. Dad's three best friends have all died. They used to say that they were stronger when they were together but Dad's death hit all of them hard. In respect of the GRO-B we used to joke that Dad was the brains of the operation and GRO-B was the frontman and the go-getter. I remember seeing a video of GRO-B speaking out about the GRO-B

6. Treatment/Care Support

1. In terms of support, I did attend a bereavement group for kids aged 10 and 11 but I was not actually able to talk about how my Dad passed away. GRO-B my social worker, sometimes took me bowling which I think was to try and distract me and also to give my mum a break. GRO-B would bring up topics for us to discuss and try to give me the opportunity to express how I felt about things.
2. I have been having counselling recently for various reasons on a private basis and I believe that the trauma associated with losing my Dad in that way is a major factor in my unhappiness in my adult life.

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3. I think the secrecy that surrounded Dad's death had a lasting effect. Not being to talk about big trauma in my life has caused me to suppress my emotions and feelings.

7. **Financial Assistance**

1. My Mum GRO-B will provide more detail about financial assistance in her witness statement to the Inquiry.

8. **Other Issues**

1. The Birchgrove Group created a memorial in 2003 which consisted of 1200 trees being planted at Stratton Wood near Swindon and a memorial stone being laid there in memory of the 1200 haemophiliacs infected with HIV.
2. I started looking at the website for the Birchgrove Group and it made me feel more connected with my Dad. I decided I would like to go and see the memorial. We spent an hour and a half trying to find the memorial in the Stratton wood. The memorial isn't signposted at all. It seemed quite poignant to me that the tribute to the victims is now concealed as a result of a lack of funding and care – just like the contaminated blood scandal has been.
3. My thoughts on what happened and why - I think that an American pharmaceutical company, Bayer, put profit over compassion. They knew they were going to infect people but decided to go ahead and make profit regardless of the risk. Then certain individuals in the NHS and Westminster who thought they would be blamed tried to cover up what had happened.
4. This kind of tragic disregard for human life can leave you really jaded about the world.

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5. Overall, I really want the truth to come out. This still feels like a secret tragedy. I want to see the contaminated blood scandal get the headlines it deserves so that people know what Westminster and the Department of Health are capable of.

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Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this Witness Statement are true.

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

25/02/2019.