



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

HOSPITAL INFORMATION SERVICES
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January 3, 1995

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Dear Brothers:

Along with the letter "To All Congregations" of January 3, 1995, we would like to set out in this letter for elders only some additional information that we feel will be helpful to you in looking after blood-transfusion matters and cooperating with the Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) in your area.

Information about the patient that you need before calling the HLC. You will find with this letter a listing of information that experience shows will make the work of the HLCs most effective in behalf of the brothers. We suggest that you make copies to have with you at all times to serve as a reminder of what is needed. Please implement this suggestion right away.

HLCs look after blood-transfusion matters only. At times, Witnesses who are in a situation that does not involve a blood transfusion may want you to call the HLC for information on psychiatrists or various medications. They may ask for assistance to locate doctors who treat health problems that ordinarily do not utilize blood, such as Parkinson's disease. You can tactfully explain the limited scope of the HLC work. Please review the information at the top of page 22 in "Pay Attention to Yourself and to All the Flock" to help you to do so.

The HLC member list is only for the use of elders. This list is not to be supplied to publishers, not to be posted on the information board at the Kingdom Hall, and not to be otherwise distributed at either the congregation or the circuit level. Unfortunately, we are still getting some reports, though fewer now, of elders giving the name and telephone number of an HLC member to a publisher who has a problem, leaving the publisher to follow through on his own. This practice is not looking after the flock as well as we wish. However, you may make yourselves several copies of this list so that you have one at home, at work, and at the Kingdom Hall or an assembly location.

The HLC arrangement is only for baptized and unbaptized publishers and their children. This is an area where we must be careful. Some non-Witness relatives have started out saying that they did not want blood, so Witness relatives got the help of the HLC without disclosing all the facts. But when pressure was applied by the medical staff or the patient's condition suddenly worsened, the patient gave in and took blood. This sends a wrong message to the hospital personnel, who then decide that Witnesses will compro-

mise under certain circumstances. Remember, the hospital staff does not distinguish between Witnesses and non-Witnesses the way we do. But imagine the great pressure to which the next Witness patient will be subjected as the staff tries to make him compromise! So you must know the status of each patient and convey that accurately to your fellow elders on the HLC. While we may be able to help to some extent, we must be most careful when dealing with non-Witness relatives, wayward ones, and new Bible students or return visits on whom only a few calls have been made. Such individuals should make it clear to the staff of the hospital that they are NOT Jehovah's Witnesses. Especially, though, must we proceed with caution when dealing with any who are disfellowshipped. Be sure to advise the HLC member of any cautionary circumstances. We may be able to assist the Witness marriage mate or Witness parents of the disfellowshipped person, but if we do, the hospital staff should be advised that this person is NOT one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

HLCs and PVGs (Patient Visitation Groups) in a city do not replace local elders when it comes to visiting the sick at home or in the hospital. All Christians have the responsibility to visit, encourage, and care for the sick. (Matt. 25:36) But elders have the greater responsibility in this feature of shepherding the flock of God. (Acts 20:28, 35; 1 Pet. 5:2-4) So do not conclude that HLCs or PVGs will look after this feature of your work. In the first place, we do not have HLCs or PVGs in all cities. Second, even in cities where they are located, HLCs only look after blood-transfusion matters, as mentioned above. Please review the material in "Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock," pages 21, 22.

If in some critical emergency situation the HLC asks you to stay with the patient in the hospital because the doctors are threatening to give blood, do your best to cooperate. You may have to organize other elders and mature ones to assist you so that you always have someone present until the patient stabilizes and the threat of a blood transfusion has been eliminated. This will be a blessing to the brother or sister who is sick.

May Jehovah bless your endeavors thus to assist your brothers in a time of need. Aiding others to maintain integrity brings true joy. It indicates that we support Jehovah's law and hence his rightful sovereignty.—Ps. 19:7; Rev. 4:11.

Your brothers,

Nathan Tower B. S. Society

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[Please read and discuss this letter at your next elders' meeting.]