



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201-2483, U.S.A. PHONE (718) 560-5000

December 1, 2000

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Dear Brothers:

Enclosed is an outline that will be helpful in developing material for the Service Meeting part entitled "Loving Provisions for Our Health Care," to be given during the week of January 8, 2001. All elders and book study conductors should receive a copy of the outline, a revised health-care durable power of attorney (DPA) form, and an Advance Directive Guide.

The Society has prepared new DPA forms and accompanying guides that you will make available to congregation publishers that evening. These not only conform to the statutes of each state but also closely conform to the material discussed in "Questions From Readers" in the June 15 and October 15, 2000, issues of *The Watchtower*. Even if publishers have filled out a DPA in the past, they will likely find it wise to document their current wishes by filling out this new form. Having these forms properly filled out can make a significant difference in medical outcomes. Careful consideration of the new guide for the DPA should allow you to provide good direction and answer questions as necessary.

Reports from the field indicate that only a small percentage of brothers have filled out the Society's DPA form. While many are careful to fill out and consciously carry the Advance Medical Directive card, a much greater degree of legal protection is available when the DPA is carefully executed.

Elders should help brothers and sisters understand Jehovah's view on blood and the issues involved in order for them to make informed decisions when filling out the DPA. For this reason, it may be advisable for the presiding overseer to meet with the elders and book study conductors. Review the outline provided and the references cited as well as the DPA form and Advance Directive Guide. Guidance provided by the elders should be informative even though responses may vary. Wisely, elders should be careful not to impose their conscience on others. Each Witness needs to make his/her own decision.

We are confident that good preparation by the elder assigned this Service Meeting part, combined with assistance from all elders and book study conductors, will significantly increase the number of brothers with completed DPAs. Your cooperation and diligence in this important matter is in harmony with the words recorded at 1 John 3:18, which explains: "Let us love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth." Be assured of our appreciation for your diligent efforts to care for the flock of God.

Your brothers,

Watchtower B. & T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

LOVING PROVISIONS FOR OUR HEALTH CARE

(Outline for Service Meeting part for the week of January 8, 2001)

Introduction: The Advance Medical Directive/Release card has been effectively used for some 20 years. Additionally, on the basis of developments in the law in recent years, the Society's Legal Department has prepared health-care durable power of attorney (DPA) forms* for use by Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the United States. Both the card and the DPA forms are legal documents designed to protect us against unwanted transfusions.—Acts 15:28, 29.

These two documents complement each other and both should be filled out for the best protection. Why?

Advance Medical Directive/Release card

The card is small and can be carried at all times.—Read Ecclesiastes 9:11.

In the event that you are rendered unconscious in an emergency, the card will:

- Identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses
- Alert medical personnel to your refusal of blood
- Indicate that you have filled out a DPA form
- Identify your emergency contacts (It would be wise to make the emergency contacts on your card the same persons you appoint as your health-care agents.)

DPA form

These new DPA forms are based on state statutes that hospitals and doctors should be familiar with.

In addition to clearly expressing your refusal of donor blood, the DPA contains additional information that is not included on the Advance Medical Directive/Release card. For example, it communicates your decisions regarding:

Medical products containing blood fractions (Read paragraph 2 on page 30 of the June 15, 2000, issue of *The Watchtower*)

Medical procedures, such as hemodilution, cell salvage, and tagging (Read paragraphs 2-3 on page 31 of the October 15, 2000, issue of *The Watchtower*)

End-of-life decisions (Give reference of September 8, 1986, issue of *Awake!*, pages 20-1)

Appointment of an agent to make health-care decisions consistent with your values if you lose decision-making capacity

In the hospital setting when a patient is anxious, in pain, under medication, or in an emergency, one may not have the time or clear thinking ability to fill out a DPA form properly.

A new guide has been prepared that provides very helpful information. Each family may have a copy.

* Elder should refer to health-care durable power of attorney form by full state title if the abbreviation DPA does not apply, such as with New York's Health Care Proxy or Oregon's Advance Directive.

From the Advance Directive Guide that accompanies the Society's DPA, please be sure to discuss the following points:

- Is a lawyer or doctor needed to fill out the DPA?
- Who should be appointed as a health-care agent?
- What should you do with your completed DPA?

A properly filled-out DPA form has turned many confrontational situations into cooperative ones as the following example shows.

A Witness family traveled out of town to attend a district convention. Unfortunately, a family member suddenly became ill and had to return home. From the airport, he was taken to the emergency room. Although the family had the brother's Advance Medical Directive card, they did not have his completed DPA form. Additionally, the patient was unconscious. The attending doctor informed the family that the hospital policy was to contact their legal department immediately when blood was being refused after being deemed necessary by the physician. The family immediately made arrangements to have the DPA form faxed from home to the hospital. As soon as it arrived, the emergency room doctor completely changed his attitude and told the family how much he appreciated having the DPA form because now he knew which medical treatments were acceptable and which were not. Thus, instead of being focused on the refusal of blood, the doctors, together with the appointed health-care agent, wanted to discuss what alternatives were going to be used as well as to discuss end-of-life matters. The family stated that having the filled-out DPA not only prevented a blood transfusion but transformed a confrontational situation into a comfortable, cooperative one.

This experience illustrates the positive reaction a doctor may have when he sees a DPA because it expresses the patient's informed treatment decisions and the physician can proceed with nonblood care without fear of legal repercussions.

What to do when it is your personal desire to avoid blood or blood components:

- All the information in the Advance Directive Guide as well as the Society references should be carefully reviewed and prayerfully considered. If needed, consult with experienced and knowledgeable individuals.
- Then make an informed decision. We encourage you not to delay.—Read Proverbs 22:3.
- Fill out both the Advance Medical Directive/Release card and the DPA form for the best protection.
[Explain procedure for distributing, filling out, and signing DPAs and cards, including Identity Card, and what unbaptized publishers can do.—See page 2 of January 2001 issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry* and Advance Directive Guide.]

Conclusion: To have your personal wishes on this matter respected, exercise wisdom and foresight by filling out both of these legal documents, which protect you from a blood transfusion and set forth your written instructions regarding acceptable medical treatment.—Proverbs 9:9; Isaiah 48:17.