

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

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November 1, 2004

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS IN THE UNITED STATES

Re: DPA cards

Dear Brothers:

Enclosed is a manuscript entitled "Obeying God's Command to Abstain From Blood," a sample of the revised DPA card for your state, and *Instructions for Filling Out the DPA Card*. The presiding overseer should give this material to the secretary. The secretary should make copies of these documents for each Congregation Book Study overseer. In this way, book study overseers, as needed, can assist publishers in their groups to fill out the DPA card properly. Other elders may make copies of this material as desired. The secretary should give the original documents to the brother handling the part in the Service Meeting during the week of December 27, 2004.

We have also enclosed the answer sheet for the Service Meeting part entitled "Benefit From the Video *No Blood—Medicine Meets the Challenge*." The presiding overseer should give this material to the brother assigned the part.

A consignment of DPA cards based on the state of your congregation and *Instructions for Filling Out the DPA Card* will be sent to your congregation. When you receive the shipment, the secretary should check to ensure that these two items were received. If either item is missing, he should immediately telephone the Shipping Department in Wallkill at (845) 744-6000 to request reshipment. If the congregation does not receive enough DPA cards or *Instructions for Filling Out the DPA Card*, an additional supply may be requested using the *Literature Request Form (S-14)*. *Instructions for Filling Out the DPA Card* may also be photocopied.

If there are publishers in your congregation who live in a state different from the state of the congregation, a sufficient quantity of DPA cards for the state where the publishers live should be requested using the *Literature Request Form*. When the part is discussed, please use the DPA cards of the state where the majority of the publishers live.

The secretary should also ensure that a sufficient quantity of *Identity Cards* are available for unbaptized children of Witness parents. New publishers baptized during the course of the year should receive a DPA card to fill out. As a reminder, the new DPA card is valid indefinitely and need not be renewed annually.

All previous versions of the DPA form and the *Advance Directive Guide* should be removed from your stock and destroyed. Publishers should be directed to replace all copies of the previous DPA form with the new DPA card. As a reminder, publishers should make photocopies for their records, physicians, health-care agents, and so forth. They should carry on their person only the original DPA card, not a photocopy.

We take this opportunity to send you an expression of our warm love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

cc: Traveling overseers

Obeying God's Command to Abstain From Blood

[Manuscript for Service Meeting part for the week of December 27, 2004]

In recent years, increased attention has been given to the importance of providing an advance written statement of an individual's medical choices and wishes. Many courts have recognized that patients have the legal right to determine, over the objections of medical and legal personnel, what medical intervention they will allow.

As explained in the December 2004 issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry*, the branch office has provided a new DPA card based on the statutory requirements for each state. The new document combines the essential elements of the durable power of attorney form (DPA) and the *Advance Medical Directive/Release* (AMD) card into a single legal document. You will need to fill out the DPA card for your state of residence only. The DPA card is valid indefinitely anywhere in the United States and will serve as a statement of your wishes when you travel internationally. The secretary should provide a DPA card to all newly baptized publishers during the year.

It has been observed that the vast majority of publishers have routinely filled out the AMD card and carried it with them. However, estimates are that a substantially smaller percentage of brothers have executed a DPA. With the elements of both documents combined into one, all publishers should now see the need to execute the new DPA card for added legal protection. The previous AMD card expressed our wish to avoid blood transfusions, but provided less information as to what alternative medical treatment we would accept. This new document also allows the option of initialing your choices of alternative medical treatments and procedures and specifying your other health-care instructions.

We will now review parts of the new DPA card. Please take out your copy of this document. **[Note to speaker: If your congregation has publishers from two or more states, use the DPA card where the majority of the publishers reside. Oregon speakers should refer to the note at the end of page 3.]**

At **point 1**, *clearly* print or type your full name on the blank line.

Point 2 is an affirmation that, as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, your instructions are (1) you refuse a transfusion of whole blood and its primary components (red cells, white cells, platelets, or plasma) under any circumstances and (2) you refuse to predonate (in the medical field the procedure is called PAD, which stands for Predeposited Autologous Donation) your blood for later use in treating you or someone else. This statement should help medical personnel to see that the primary reason that you refuse a blood transfusion is religious and not because the use of blood is fraught with risks or that blood transfusion is "bad medicine." Therefore, in discussion with medical personnel, it is important to emphasize that your principal motivation is that you wish to obey Jehovah's injunction to 'abstain from blood.'—Acts 15:29.

Point 3 addresses the use of minor fractions of blood in your treatment. To assist you to make your personal decisions, please read and prayerfully consider the Biblical principles discussed in the June 15, 2004, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 22-4, and 29-31. Although whether or not you will accept a minor blood fraction is a matter for you to determine according to your conscience, it is, nonetheless, important, since your relationship with Jehovah is involved. **[Note to speaker: Please read Romans 14:12 and Galatians 6:5. Emphasize that each person will render an account to Jehovah for his actions in line with the dictates of his Bible-trained conscience.]** Hence, it is essential that we are guided by a properly trained conscience and not simply according to what others may choose to accept.

After the matter of fractions has been prayerfully considered, initial on your DPA card any of the following that apply:

- (a) *I refuse all.* This means you refuse all minor fractions of blood.
- (b) *I refuse all except:* . . . If you choose this option, clearly print or type which minor blood fractions you will accept. You may wish to consult the January 8, 2000, issue of *Awake!* for information on these products. **[Note to speaker: It will not be necessary for you to list the specific minor blood fractions referred to in the article.]**
- (c) *I may be willing to accept some minor blood fractions, but the details will have to be discussed with me if I am conscious, or with my health-care agent* in case of my incapacity.* If you do not desire to authorize your health-care agent* to fulfill this responsibility, strike out the phrase “or with my health-care agent* in case of my incapacity” and initial.

See Adjustment 1

Point 4 addresses medical procedures involving the use of your own blood that may temporarily leave your body. To assist you to make your personal decisions, please read and prayerfully consider the Biblical principles discussed in the October 15, 2000, issue of *The Watchtower*, pages 30-1. Then, following the guidance of your Bible-trained conscience, initial on your DPA card any of the following that apply:

- (a) *I refuse all.* This means you refuse all procedures involving the use of your own blood, except for diagnostic procedures, such as blood samples for testing.
- (b) *I refuse all except:* . . . If you choose this option, clearly print or type which medical procedures involving the use of your own blood that may temporarily leave your body you will accept. You may wish to consult the January 8, 2000, issue of *Awake!* for information on these procedures. **[Note to speaker: It will not be necessary for you to list the specific medical procedures referred to in the article.]**
- (c) *I may be willing to accept some medical procedures, but the details will have to be discussed with me if I am conscious, or with my health-care agent* in case of my incapacity.* If you do not desire to authorize your health-care agent* to fulfill this responsibility, strike out the phrase “or with my health-care agent* in case of my incapacity” and initial.

***Note to speaker:** In some states, the person appointed may be called an “attorney-in-fact,” “patient advocate,” “proxy,” “representative,” or “surrogate.” Thus, use the appropriate name as shown on your state’s DPA card.

8. Once I have filled out a DPA card, will it ever be necessary to fill out a new one?

Answer: If you need to make any changes to your DPA card, such as changing your wishes, health-care agents*, addresses, telephone numbers, and so forth, or if your DPA card has been lost or destroyed, it will be necessary to fill out a new DPA card. Even if the changes are minor, you should replace all previous copies with a new card.

9. If I live in one state but work or am hospitalized in another, which state DPA card should I execute?

Answer: The document for your state of residence. As stated, a properly executed document is valid indefinitely anywhere in the United States.

10. May family members legally override my DPA card?

Answer: No. The disagreement of a family member with your health-care instructions has no legal relevance.

Conclusion: Through his “faithful steward” class, Jehovah gives us what we need so that we can obey his injunction to abstain from a God-dishonoring blood transfusion. It is the course of wisdom to carefully and prayerfully consider these matters in advance and make use of the loving provisions made available by the organization.—Luke 12:42; Proverbs 22:3; Isaiah 48:17; Acts 15:28, 29.

*See footnote on page 2.