



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

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TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

Dear Brothers:

We are pleased to take this opportunity to provide some important reminders regarding the Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) arrangement.

How can you prepare for medical treatment? We cannot overemphasize the importance of filling in the *Advance Decision to Refuse Specified Medical Treatment* document and carrying it on your person. Please also give a copy to your doctor (GP) and your congregation secretary. In most cases when you are referred to hospital, you can discuss your treatment choices with the doctors. However, the *Advance Decision* document is specifically designed to cover emergency situations when you are unable to communicate. It only becomes legally binding when you cannot express yourself. As it indicates your personal views, its availability will enable the medical team to act promptly to provide appropriate emergency treatment.

When should you ask an elder to contact the Hospital Liaison Committee? As soon as you are referred for treatment that may involve the blood issue, the HLC should be contacted. This should always be done through a local elder. While you may know HLC members, or have had dealings with them in the past, may we please appeal to you to always make an initial approach through a local elder. We appreciate that some may hesitate to discuss health issues; however, not informing the HLC can create serious difficulties later. Please note that the HLC arrangement is only for baptized and unbaptized publishers and their children.

As soon as a referral to hospital is discussed, you need to remind your doctor (GP) of your request for non-blood management and ensure that this is included in the referral letter.

When hospitalized. Once you are admitted to hospital, you should take responsibility for certain matters. Please note the following reminders.

Personally check your hospital medical notes to ensure that your refusal of blood is duly recorded.

Draw attention to your request for “no blood” whenever there is a change of personnel in your care. Ever-changing personnel involved in patient care throughout the NHS leads to difficulties with continuity of care and/or failures to hand over information.

Do not hesitate to request the involvement of a consultant if you discern a downturn in your condition that does not appear to receive urgent or senior attention.

What if your hospital is a long way from the congregation? In this case, speak to your elders who can arrange for you to receive visits from brothers and sisters near the hospital. This could include assistance to family members who have to travel some distance to visit you. If you have been unable to make such arrangements in advance, you can ask the hospital (often their Chaplaincy Department) to request such a visit, as they may hold contact details for the local Patient Support Group (PSG). Please note that data protection restrictions make it difficult for the local brothers to learn of your admittance, unless you make a formal request for visits from the PSG.

What can be done to assist elderly family members? Please keep copies of their *Advance Decision* documents. These provide evidence of their long-held views, should they not be sufficiently competent to communicate their treatment choices. Additionally, it is wise to keep copies with their congregation secretary. Some of our dear elderly brothers and sisters have been transfused because documents could not be located. Please could we ask all publishers with elderly family members to give attention to this.

Care Plan for Pregnancy. When a sister becomes pregnant, it is important that she requests the *Care Plan* from the HLC through her elders. Then, as appropriate, the committee can share information with her and her husband. It is very important for the sister to draw attention to this document at her antenatal clinical appointments, and to have a copy of it added to her notes. She should also request a meeting to discuss these matters with a member of the anaesthetic department of the hospital at which she plans to give birth.

We trust you will find these comments helpful and we join you in praying for Jehovah's continued blessing on this arrangement to care for his people. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) Please be assured of our warm Christian love and best wishes.

Your brothers,

Watch Tower B. & J. Society
OF BRITAIN

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