



WATCH TOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF BRITAIN

THE RIDGEWAY LONDON NW7 1RN

TELEPHONE 020 8906 2211

HIA:HSA May 2, 2011

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Supporting our brothers regarding the blood issue

Dear Brothers:

You will shortly receive (in hard copy) an up-to-date Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) contact list. The congregation secretary should provide each elder with a copy of this list, along with a copy of this letter. Each elder should have these details to hand at all times; where possible, we would suggest that these numbers also be stored on your mobile telephone. This letter replaces the letter dated May 2, 2010, which should be removed from the congregation file and be destroyed.

Contact the HLC as soon as you become aware that a publisher or unbaptized publisher is referred for medical treatment that could involve the blood issue and they are happy for you to involve the HLC (note that this might not always include surgery, for example, chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments for cancer). An elder should always make the introductory call to the HLC. While some may hesitate to discuss health or medical matters, please emphasize that early contact with the HLC can help prevent serious difficulties.

When facing hospitalization, publishers need to remind their doctor (GP) of their request for non-blood surgical and/or medical management. It is important for the doctor to include this in the referral letter to a specialist/surgeon.

Information you need before you call the HLC is indicated on the contact list, possibly on the back. When copying the list for distribution among the elders, please ensure that these points are included.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of the brothers filling in an *Advance Decision document*. Many have evidently not done so and, as yet, of those who have, few have lodged copies with their congregation secretary. Often, an *Advance Decision* document cannot be located in an emergency and this continues to create serious difficulties. Hence we suggest that copies be lodged with the secretary, then, if the patient's document cannot be located, the HLC may access a copy via this route. If the secretary is away for any lengthy period, these should be accessible to another elder.

Completing this document can be a particular challenge for **publishers whose mother tongue is not English**. Please be alert to suggest to such ones that they check the CD-ROM in their mother tongue (if available) in order to obtain the material from the "Questions From Readers" articles (*w00* 10/15 and *w04* 6/15) along with the November 2006 *Our Kingdom Ministry* insert. You can then assist the publishers to transfer their responses from the Worksheets featured within the insert to their *Advance Decision* document.

With regard to our **elderly brothers and sisters**, copies of their previous *Advance Decision* documents need to be kept to prove their long-held views. If no such document can be found, it can create serious difficulties for doctors or carers, who may be anxious about their legal position if an elderly person is not sufficiently competent to refuse recommended medical treatment.

Please could each group overseer check whether family members hold copies for elderly parents, especially those in care homes. Group overseers should remind family members to keep copies of these or, if there is no immediate family in the truth, accept this responsibility and also lodge copies with the congregation secretary.

The NHS has been rolling out a programme introducing **summary care records** (SCRs) as part of their NHS Care Record Service. It is claimed that these will have considerable benefits in emergencies, as personnel will have access to vital patient information. Those who have no objection to having an SCR made by their local GP might beneficially request that their refusal of blood and primary blood components be formally recorded on their SCR. We understand that, in time, further details may be added to these records and, at that point, once the system is fully operational, we suggest that the brothers request their GP that a copy of their *Advance Decision* document become part of their record.

When **children** are referred for surgery, please review the material in the document "How Parents Can Protect Children from Misuse of Blood" (S-55), released at our recent Kingdom Ministry School.

Pregnant sisters should ask you to request the *Care Plan for Women in Labour* from the HLC. Please ensure that the sister understands that one copy should be added to her clinical notes, and remind her to request a meeting with a representative from the anaesthetic department during her antenatal care.

It is helpful to inform the **Patient Support Group** (PSG) when one of your publishers is admitted into a local hospital, but naturally, the responsibility to visit such ones would rest with the local congregation.

If a publisher is hospitalized away from home, support by the PSG can be arranged through your local HLC. If assistance with accommodation is required for a publisher to stay near a relative in hospital, please provide information about the spiritual background, the likely length of stay, and the financial arrangements for food, transport, and accommodation. Please assist if any problems arise in connection with these arrangements. For information about how publishers can most effectively assist the HLC, please review our letter of May 1, 2008, to all congregations.

We sincerely appreciate the fine work accomplished by congregation elders in assisting individuals who face faith-challenging medical situations. (1 Peter 5:2) Please be assured of our warm Christian affection.

Your brothers in Jehovah's service,

Watch Tower B. & J. Society
OF BRITAIN

HOSPITAL INFORMATION SERVICES

PS to the secretary:

This letter should be retained in the congregation file along with other material relating to the Hospital Liaison Committee.