

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



The Ridgeway, London, NW7 1RN Telephone: 020 8906 2211

HIA:HSA May 2, 2012

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Supporting our brothers regarding the blood issue

Dear Brothers:

You will shortly receive, in hard copy via the route envelopes, an up-to-date Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) contact list. The congregation secretary should provide each elder with a copy of this list. 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, 2011, 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, having checked that the individual is happy for the HLC to be involved. (Apart from surgery, this could also involve chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments for cancer.) An elder should always make the introductory call. 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, or subsequent correspondence with 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 a 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. Please could we remind elders to check the jw.org website as this insert is featured there in an increasing number of languages. You can then assist the publishers to transfer their responses from the Worksheets featured within the insert to their *Advance Decision* document. Please could all elders who serve in a foreign-language congregation or who are associated with a foreign-language group check our letter of November 10, 2011, with respect to this document for their publishers.

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 publishers, 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 ask their GP for a copy of their *Advance Decision* document to become part of their record.

When **children** are referred for treatment that could involve the blood issue, please review the material in the document "How Parents Can Protect Children from Misuse of Blood" (S-55).

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. On this point, please check the guidance contained in our letter to all bodies of elders of December 11, 2011.

This letter should be kept in the "Hospital Liaison Committee/Advance Decision" category section of the congregation file. It replaces the letter of May 2, 2011, addressed to all bodies of elders. For information about how publishers can most effectively assist the HLC, please review our letter of May 1, 2008, to all congregations. This should be kept in the same section of your file.

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,

*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

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.