


WATCHTOWER
Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Hospital Information Desk
25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, U.S.A.
Phone: (718) 560-4300 Fax: (718) 560-4479 E-mail: hid.us@jw.org

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TO ALL HOSPITAL LIAISON COMMITTEES

Re: Human serum albumin in contrast agents

Dear Brothers:

We are writing to advise you that certain contrast agents used in diagnostic imaging may contain the blood fraction human serum albumin.

Contrast agents are solutions injected into the body to enhance the clarity and accuracy of certain images in diagnostic studies. Medical imaging allows doctors to assess and diagnose patients' medical symptoms. For example, a doctor may need to observe the function of the heart and surrounding blood flow in diagnosing vascular disease. Several kinds of diagnostic imaging technologies are used to produce images of structures and fluids within the body: ultrasound (including echocardiography), radiography (X-rays), computed tomography (CT), and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). The type of machine or technique used depends on the patient's symptoms and the part of the patient's anatomy being studied.

In some kinds of ultrasound imaging of the heart (echocardiography), a contrast agent is injected into a patient's bloodstream during the procedure. The agent improves visualization and aids in the diagnosis of heart disease. A contrast agent used in some of these tests is known to contain albumin. The brand name of the product is Optison. Optison contains 10 mg/mL of albumin. A relatively small quantity of the contrast agent, usually 0.5 mL initial dose and up to a maximum of 8.7 mL in any patient study, is injected during certain echocardiography tests. In some lands, an albumin-free ultrasound contrast agent named Definity is being used for echocardiography with satisfactory results.

At the next meeting of your Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC), the chairman should make definite arrangements for each brother to make brief calls on heads of diagnostic imaging and cardiology at two or three hospitals where our brothers seek medical care (preferably those hospitals where he knows some staff members) to thank them for their work and to offer a copy of the flyer entitled *Religious and Ethical Position on Medical Therapy and Related Matters* (ret 7/12). The brother should call attention to the chart at the top of page 3 and state that some Witnesses do not object to a contrast agent that contains albumin but that some do. You should endeavor to complete these visits by early 2015. Also, if HLC members become aware that a brother or sister who objects to blood fractions has an echocardiography exam scheduled, they should inform the patient of the name of the albumin-free contrast agent that is used locally.

Thank you for your diligent efforts and hard work. We send our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,


OF NEW YORK, INC.