

Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses



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

HIA May 2, 2015

TO ALL BODIES OF ELDERS

Re: Supporting Our Brothers Regarding the Blood Issue

Dear Brothers:

When a brother or sister in your congregation faces a medical emergency, your being equipped to provide assistance and support is invaluable. Often this will involve contacting your local Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) and, clearly, for you to do so efficiently, preparation is needed.

We therefore ask that you please take a few minutes to ensure that the HLC contact details on your mobile device are up to date. A current HLC list is available by clicking on the “Contacts” link under the “Search For” heading on the “Lookup” tab of jw.org (Lookup>Contacts>Category>HLC). For those HLCs that have a 24-hour emergency number, please ensure that this number is included.

You may also wish to keep hard copies of this list to hand for use in case of an emergency.

The HLC arrangement is available only for publishers, baptized or unbaptized, and their children; in most cases an elder should contact the HLC on their behalf. However, on rare occasions, likely in an emergency, you may determine that it would be best for the patient or a family member to contact the HLC direct.

Please give special attention and offer assistance to the following:

- **Pregnant sisters.** A *Care Plan for Women in Labour* should be requested from the local HLC. It is helpful to supply the following details via email: the sister's name and contact information (including email), your contact information, the name of your congregation, the name of the hospital she will be attending, the expected date of delivery, and details regarding her husband's spiritual status. Please supply the article “Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies” from the November 2009 issue of *Awake!* (available in the “Forms” section of jw.org).
- **Children.** Clinicians and hospitals will not provide assurances that they will not use blood if they deem it clinically indicated, especially when treating young children, infants, or premature babies. Review with the parents the points contained in the S-55 information sheet (available in the “Forms” section of jw.org) and share, when appropriate, the December 2005 *Our Kingdom Ministry* article “Could Your Child Make a Mature Decision?” When consulted, the HLC can assist in locating cooperative doctors and help parents handle matters in a reasonable, yet realistic way. With mutual respect, it can be established that although they cannot consent to the use of blood, parents are prepared to consent to a course of treatment.
- **Older ones.** Please ensure that our dear older brothers and sisters have appropriate support if they face medical treatment or hospitalization. Always maintain a copy of their *Advance Decision to Refuse Specified Medical Treatment* document in the congregation file. Family members in the truth should keep copies of elderly publishers' *Advance Decision*

documents, including previously completed ones. This is invaluable in establishing their personally held views, should they start suffering from any form of dementia.

- **Those taking anticoagulation medication.** The possible need to counteract the action of these drugs in an emergency is an important consideration. In the case of warfarin (Coumadin[®]), preferred reversal agents contain blood fractions. Newer anticoagulants offer less inconvenience and complications, but currently lack reversal agents. HLCs have been provided with information on this subject that elders can use in assisting the publishers. Brothers and sisters may want to discuss the risks and benefits of the different options with their doctor.—Prov. 22:3.
- **Those with cancer or blood disorders.** Most treatment plans will include surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy, or a combination of these. Anaemia and suppression of blood cell production are highly likely. The HLCs have become increasingly familiar with possible strategies in these difficult conditions and can provide helpful information for our brothers, as well as, if appropriate, supporting documents for the treating team.

The following documents are attached with this letter:

- *Supporting Our Brothers With Their Stand on Blood—Checklist and When to Contact the HLC.* These two documents form a two-page PDF. Please carefully follow through with respect to this material. In order to ensure access to these important reminders, please download a copy on your mobile device(s).
- *Supporting Our Brothers With Their Stand on Blood—Secretary Checklist.* Congregation secretaries will find this to be a helpful point of reference, and their careful follow-through with these reminders will be of great benefit to the local publishers.

Thank you for helping those in your congregation to plan ahead for unexpected and challenging medical situations. (Eccl. 9:11) Please be assured of our warm Christian love.

Your brothers,
*Christian Congregation
of Jehovah's Witnesses*

Attachments (2)

PS to the secretary:

This letter should be retained in the congregation file along with other material relating to the HLC. At this time, you may destroy the May 2, 2014, May 2, 2013, and May 2, 2012 letters.

c: Circuit overseers

We suggest that circuit overseers lodge a copy of their *Advance Decision* document(s) with a local HLC and their GP.