



WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

HOSPITAL INFORMATION SERVICES
25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A.

PHONE (718) 625-3600

May 1, 1992

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

Dear Brothers:

Hospital Information Services has now been operational for four years. With Jehovah's blessing much has been accomplished in that time to help you should you ever have to face a faith-challenging medical situation and yet are "firmly resolved" to refuse to give in to a blood transfusion.--Deut. 12:23-25; Acts 15:28, 29.

In the United States, we now have more than a hundred Hospital Liaison Committees (HLCs) functioning in all the larger cities where there are major medical centers. More than 650 elders serve on these committees. Last year these brothers handled more than 50,000 telephone calls. To date it has also been possible to set up this program in 63 branches of the Society, with over eight hundred HLCs making this arrangement available to some 3.4 million of our brothers. We rejoice to see this loving provision in place. But please note that this service is not for non-Witnesses--it is only for baptized publishers and their children and for unbaptized publishers and their children.

You will also recall that some definite direction on how to work with these liaison committees was set out in the November 1990 *Our Kingdom Ministry* insert. At that time you were asked to save your copy by putting it in a safe place so that you could find it quickly if needed. Do you still know where your copy is? For the most part, brothers are following this direction. But we would like to call your attention to what follows so that you can cooperate to a greater degree in the future.--Heb. 13:17.

In January your body of elders was provided with an updated listing of the nearest HLC members. This listing will not be posted on the information board of your Kingdom Hall or otherwise be given general circulation. If you have a genuine need for the help of that HLC, as directed in the insert of *Our Kingdom Ministry* for November 1990, you should contact any of your local elders, who will in turn ask enough questions to assess the matter properly. If there is a real need, the elder himself will assist you in making contact with the HLC. He is not to leave you or your family to follow through alone. This procedure properly keeps your local elders somewhat involved when such faith-challenging medical situations develop.--Eccl. 4:9, 10, 12.

The HLC in your area will help you find a cooperative doctor when you have difficulty finding one who will treat you without insisting on using blood transfusions. It may also be possible for committee members to be available for discussions with any doctors already

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attending you but who do not understand our position or who are not yet sufficiently aware of many alternative procedures available.

Now, here is a most serious matter in which many of you need to cooperate better: The one complaint most commonly raised against us by many doctors in most lands is that Jehovah's Witnesses often do not inform the doctor at the first consultation or treatment that the patient is a Witness and that blood is not to be used in treatment or surgery. Some of our worst problems have occurred because of this lack of communication. It discourages doctors from cooperating with us. The doctor really needs to know this position early if he is to cooperate well with us as to our medical needs.

We are creating another problem for doctors and hospitals when we do not have our Advance Medical Directive/Release document with us at all times, or we do not have it all filled out, dated, and signed with our signature properly witnessed. Unfortunately, especially in the case of accidents, we still hear reports of Witnesses taken to hospital emergency rooms without their Medical Directive with them to protect them from an unwanted blood transfusion. Doctors understandably raise questions about the validity of the document when it is not dated or not signed or not witnessed.

Similarly, it is most important when we (or a relative) enter a hospital that we ask for and fill out the hospital's 'release from liability' forms that will make clear our position on blood. We should read their forms carefully so that we do not inadvertently give them permission to use blood in some pretended emergency. Their forms usually have a clause inserted that can nullify everything we have said about not wanting blood. Yes, we can legally adjust their form, initialing wherever we amend it, before signing it. (Please see *Our Kingdom Ministry*, November 1990, page 4, paragraph 18.) Make a copy of that adjusted form for yourself just in case problems arise.

If the hospital does not have such a form, or if they say they cannot locate the form and they appear to be taking rather long to find it, ask to see the hospital administrator about it. It is inadvisable to wait too long to fill out such a form. If one of the HLC members is with you, he can provide a blank form for your use. Or in an emergency where you cannot wait, there is a sample form in the 1977 Blood booklet, page 29, that you can use. It is an American Medical Association form, so do not let anyone tell you it is not suitable to use.

We hope the above information is of benefit to you and your families as you strive to obey Jehovah's perfect law.--Ps. 19:7.

Your brothers,

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