



# Jehovah's Witnesses

## The Medical & Ethical Challenge



Hospital Liaison Committee  
for Jehovah's Witnesses

# Discussion Objectives

- Explain the position of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding clinical treatment
- Implications
  - Clinical
  - Legal and Ethical
- Complement the implementation of 'Patient Blood Management' strategies
- Introduce the Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) as a resource for you



# Hospital Liaison Committees

- Provide medical articles and other information relevant to JW's
- Offer support and act as liaison between the clinical team and patient/family
- Organise Patient Support Groups
- Help develop hospital protocols / policies
- We are available 24/7 365

NOT to 'police' matters or impinge on the Doctor/patient relationship



# Why are Blood Transfusions refused?

Our position in relation to  
blood transfusion and major component usage  
is a scriptural stand NOT a medical Stand

Scriptural references include Genesis 9:3,4 Leviticus 17:11,13 Acts 15:20 ( [jw.org](http://jw.org) )



# Jehovah's Witnesses Medical Treatment

- Seek quality medical care
- Refuse allogeneic blood transfusions
- Accept use of transfusion-alternative strategies
- Have made an informed choice





# Legal & Ethical Issues



# Treatment of Children and Minors

We readily accept that the law does not give parents unlimited medical decision making authority.

We also realise that Consultants cannot provide a 100% assurance that major blood components would not be used in the treatment of a minor.

However.....





# Treatment of Children and Minors

We greatly value clinicians who . . .

- sympathetically address parent's/young person's concerns (especially if baptised)
- thoroughly seek out all possible alternative strategies
- seek input from colleagues who may have had previous experience in such matters.



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# Mental Capacity & Competency Issues



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# Advance Decision Document

## Advance Decision to Refuse Specified Medical Treatment

- I, \_\_\_\_\_ (print or type full name),  
born \_\_\_\_\_ (date) complete this document to set  
forth my treatment instructions in case of my incapacity. **The refusal of specified  
treatment(s) contained herein continues to apply to that/those treatment(s) even if  
those medically responsible for my welfare and/or any other persons believe that  
my life is at risk.**
- I am one of Jehovah's Witnesses with firm religious convictions. With full realization  
of the implications of this position I direct that **NO TRANSFUSIONS OF BLOOD  
or primary blood components (red cells, white cells, plasma or platelets)** be  
administered to me in any circumstances. I also refuse to predonate my blood for later  
infusion.
- No Lasting Power of Attorney nor any other document that may be in force should be  
taken as giving authority to disregard or override my instructions set forth herein. Family  
members, relatives, or friends may disagree with me, but any such disagreement does not  
diminish the strength or substance of my refusal of blood or other instructions.
- Regarding end-of-life matters: [initial one of the two choices]  
(a) \_\_\_\_ I do not want my life to be prolonged if, to a reasonable degree of medical  
certainty, my situation is hopeless.  
(b) \_\_\_\_ I want my life to be prolonged as long as possible within the limits of generally  
accepted medical standards, even if this means that I might be kept alive on machines for  
years.
- Regarding other healthcare and welfare instructions** (such as current medications,  
allergies, medical problems or any other comments about my healthcare wishes):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- I consent to my relevant medical records and the details of my condition being shared with  
the Emergency Contact below and/or with member(s) of the Hospital Liaison Committee  
for Jehovah's Witnesses.

7. \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature NHS No. \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

- STATEMENT OF WITNESSES:** The person who signed this document did so in my  
presence. He or she appears to be of sound mind and free from duress, fraud, or undue  
influence. I am 18 years of age or older.

Signature of witness \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of witness \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

## 9. EMERGENCY CONTACT:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile \_\_\_\_\_

- GENERAL PRACTITIONER CONTACT  
DETAILS:** A copy of this document is  
lodged with the Registered General  
Medical Practitioner whose details  
appear below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

  
**NO BLOOD**  
(signed document inside)  
**Advance Decision to Refuse  
Specified Medical Treatment**

**Advance Decision to Refuse  
Specified Medical Treatment**  
(signed document inside)

**NO BLOOD**



# Mental Capacity & Competency

- What if a patient requires urgent medical intervention, but lacks capacity or a valid Advance Directive?
- Would I take into consideration Witness or Non Witness relatives' statements as to the patient's beliefs and wishes?
- What if necessity to act could not allow definitive legal opinion to be obtained?



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# Mental Capacity & Competency

- An Advance Directive cannot be overridden by relatives including spouses.
- In the absence of capacity or a valid Advance Directive, clinicians are directed to act in the patient's 'best interests'. Contact HLC for support.
- Professional guidelines detail that 'best interests' should take into consideration "their cultural, religious or other beliefs and values".

*("Personal Beliefs and Medical Practice" )*
- Although reasonable to solicit views of relatives, these opinions cannot be determinative.
- Where the need exists to proceed with medical/surgical interventions before clear legal opinion can be obtained, the 'principle of necessity' is respected.





# Treatment Options and Alternative Strategies



# Jehovah's Witnesses

## Basic Stand on Blood

UNACCEPTABLE	WHOLE BLOOD			
	Red Cells	White Cells	Platelets	Plasma
Christian To Decide	Derivatives From Red Cells	Derivatives From White Cells	Derivatives From Platelets	Derivatives From Plasma

### Derivative Examples

Clotting Factors (non-recombinant )

Anti-D

Other Immunoglobulins

Cryoprecipitate

Fibrinogen Concentrate

PCC's



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# Jehovah's Witnesses

## Basic Stand on Medical Procedures

UNACCEPTABLE	PRE-OPERATIVE AUTOLOGOUS DONATION			
Christian To Decide	Acute Normovolemic Haemodilution	Dialysis	Heart Lung Machine	Intra-Operative Cell Salvage Machines
	Organ Transplants	Organ Donation	Apheresis Procedures	



# Emergency Trauma Management

## Could Include:

Fluid resuscitation – Crystalloid and Colloid

Haemostatic Agents – e.g. Tranexamic Acid, Vasopressin

Plasma Alternatives – Blood Sourced e.g. PCCs, Fibrinogen etc

(unless declined in an available Advanced Directive document)

Blood Salvage

Emergency Arterial Embolisation

Oxygen Support



We would welcome opportunities to share this information with others  
Do you know anyone who might appreciate an invitation ?

# Thank You



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