

Hospital Liaison Committees

for Jehovah's Witnesses

Assisting patients and physicians



Worldwide, some 1,700 Hospital Liaison Committees form an international network operating in over 110 countries. They are made up of community-based ministers who knowledgeably interact with physicians and hospital personnel, social workers, and members of the judiciary. Upon request, they offer the following services, without charge:



- Provide clinical papers and information from peer-reviewed and respected medical journals on clinical strategies for managing patients without allogeneic blood transfusion



- Facilitate physician-to-physician consultations with qualified specialists
- Assist with patient transfer when necessary



- Make presentations to physicians, ethicists, residents, and other hospital and legal professionals



- Clarify ethical issues for Witness patients or clinicians related to medical care
- Arrange for pastoral care and practical assistance to hospitalized Witness patients

Jehovah's Witnesses' Position on Allogeneic and Autologous Blood

| POSITION | ALLOGENEIC BLOOD | AUTOLOGOUS BLOOD |
|------------------------|--|---|
| Refused | <p style="text-align: center;">Whole blood</p> <pre> graph TD WB[Whole blood] --- RC[Red Cells] WB --- WC[White Cells] WB --- PL[Platelets] WB --- P[Plasma] RC -.-> FR[Fractions from red cells] WC -.-> FW[Fractions from white cells] PL -.-> FP[Fractions from platelets] P -.-> FP[Fractions from plasma] </pre> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preoperative autologous blood collection and storage for later reinfusion |
| Potentially acceptable | | <p>Fractions from red cells</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemin • Hemoglobin <p>Fractions from white cells</p> <p>Fractions from platelets</p> <p>Fractions from plasma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albumin • Clotting factors • Fibrinogen • Immunoglobulins <p>Witnesses make personal decisions on what they can accept in good conscience. It is important to discuss in advance what products or procedures are acceptable to each patient.</p> |

What medical professionals say

“Jehovah’s Witnesses [have] instituted several services that are actively involved in issues pertaining to transfusions. First and foremost, they support the patient and his/her family to receive appropriate medical care . . . Secondly, they support health-care providers with valuable information regarding medical care without blood and facilitate communication between the patient, the physician, nurses, etc.”

—Seeber P, Shander A. *Basics of Blood Management*. Malden (USA): Blackwell Publishing, Inc.; Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2007, pp. 295-6.

“Teaching as well as nonteaching hospitals can avail themselves of Hospital Liaison Committees, whose members are specially trained Jehovah’s Witnesses who can educate physicians on Jehovah’s [Witnesses’] religious beliefs. In some cases, these committees have identified groups of physicians who agree to treat Jehovah’s Witnesses without blood, so that the health professional who has a conscientious objection to complying with the Jehovah’s Witness refusal of transfusion can refer the case to one who can.”

—Banja JD. Overriding the Jehovah’s Witness patient’s refusal of blood: a reply to Cahana, Weibel, and Hurst. *Pain Med* 2009;10(5):878-82.

“The local Hospital Liaison Committee can also act as a local resource for information regarding the beliefs and practices of Jehovah’s Witnesses. They are generally aware of up to date research and clinical practice in the area of bloodless surgery and have access to a great deal of reference material and information. Hospital Liaison Committees also hold a schedule of clinicians experienced in treating patients in accordance with the wishes of Jehovah’s Witnesses. These clinicians may be prepared to give advice if consulted or even accept transfer of the patient’s care.”

—*Management of Anaesthesia for Jehovah’s Witnesses*, Second Edition. London (UK): The Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland, 2005, p. 7.

“The Jehovah’s Witnesses provide a liaison service to assist doctors in reaching an individualized agreed strategy before the surgery, and it has been the experience of the author that this has proved very straightforward, nonconfrontational, and helpful.”

—Hivey S, et al. Religious practice, blood transfusion, and major medical procedures. *Paediatr Anaesth* 2009;19(10):934-46.



For more information

Jehovah’s Witnesses have a worldwide network of more than 1,700 Hospital Liaison Committees (HLC). This network provides authoritative information regarding clinical strategies to avoid blood transfusion and facilitates access to health care for patients who are Jehovah’s Witnesses.

To contact a local HLC representative, go to www.jw.org/en/medical-library and click “Contact Local Representative.”

