

GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING THOSE WITH MEDICAL NEEDS

Assisting baptized publishers to complete a DPA card:

Offer to assist baptized publishers, especially the elderly, in filling out a DPA card. They should prayerfully consider their decisions and then carefully read and follow the instructions on the DPA card. Adhering to the instructions helps to avoid unnecessary challenges to the legal validity of their card. Remind them to make several photocopies of their completed DPA card. They should provide copies of the card to (1) their health-care agents, (2) their doctor or hospital, and (3) their congregation secretary. Additionally, they may wish to keep a copy with their will and other important documents. Parents should use the *Identity Card (ic)* for their minor children.

The secretary should be sure to provide newly baptized publishers with the following materials:

1. DPA card (*dpa* 1/16)
2. “How Do I View Blood Fractions and Medical Procedures Involving My Own Blood?” (*kmi*11/06)—November 2006 *Our Kingdom Ministry* insert* (*kmi*12/06 Gh edition)
3. “Are You Ready to Face a Faith-Challenging Medical Situation?” (*kmi*11/90)—November 1990 *Our Kingdom Ministry* insert* (*km* 1/95 Gh edition)

*Available on jw.org

Give special attention and offer assistance to the following individuals:

Pregnant sisters: When you learn that a sister is pregnant, inquire whether she and her husband have located a cooperative doctor and medical facility that have experience in treating our sisters. This can safeguard the health and life of the mother and child. Since complications can arise throughout pregnancy, volunteer to assist the couple by contacting the Hospital Liaison Committee (HLC) and additionally provide the couple with copies of the *Care Plan*, and by reviewing with the couple the points contained in the document *How Parents Can Protect Their Children From Misuse of Blood (S-55)* and in the outline and instructions for the *Care Plan* and also the article “Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies,” in the November 2009 issue of *Awake!*, pages 26-29. The S-55 information sheet and a reprint of that article are available in the “Forms” section of jw.org.

Children: Doctors may not give 100-percent assurance that they will not use blood when treating young children, infants, and premature babies. However, the HLC can assist in locating a physician or surgeon who will go further in agreeing not to give blood. You should review with parents the points contained in the S-55 information sheet (see previous point) and share with them the December 2005 *Our Kingdom Ministry* article “Could Your Child Make a Mature Decision?”

Elderly: Older brothers and sisters may not have Witness family members and could be subjected to intimidation in a hospital. Ensure that they have a DPA card and that their designated health-care agent will uphold their wishes and respect their decisions. Always maintain a photocopy of their DPA card in the congregation file.

Those on anticoagulants or antiplatelet agents (blood thinners): These publishers may want to talk to their doctor about the risks and benefits of their options. Some of these drugs may not have an available agent to counteract their effects on bleeding. These effects could be life-threatening in an emergency, and doctors may want to prescribe a blood transfusion. Also, some reversal agents contain blood fractions. Brothers and sisters should be aware of these facts and decide accordingly.—Prov. 22:3.

Contacting the HLC:

In most cases, elders should contact the HLC directly and *only* in behalf of baptized and unbaptized publishers who request help to find a cooperative doctor (either for themselves or for their children) or whose medical condition has led to the threat of a blood transfusion. At times, the elders may determine that it would be best for the patient or a family member to contact the HLC directly, especially in emergency situations. (See the letter dated December 11, 2011, to all bodies of elders and the letter dated January 3, 2006, to all congregations.) When calling the HLC, have the following information available:

- Your congregation name and your telephone number or the name and number of another available elder
- Name, age, congregation, and telephone number of patient
- Spiritual standing of patient and family. Are unbelieving family members involved?
- Name of hospital, name of doctor, and room/telephone number
- Is a completed DPA card available? If not, help patient to fill one out immediately. (Unbaptized publishers can write out their wishes in line with the December 2004 issue of *Our Kingdom Ministry*, page 7.)
- Specific situation (cooperative doctor needed, confrontation, threat to force blood, and so forth)

Provide practical and spiritual support to hospitalized publishers:

Regarding the provision of the HLC and the Patient Visitation Group (PVG), please remember that this arrangement does not relieve local elders of their responsibility to visit the sick at home and in the hospital. Remind publishers that it is beneficial to state during the hospital admission process that they would welcome a visit from a minister of Jehovah's Witnesses. This will ensure that congregation elders and members of the PVG can gain access to provide assistance.