



# WATCHTOWER

BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

HOSPITAL INFORMATION SERVICES  
25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201-2483, U.S.A.

PHONE (718) 625-3600

January 3, 1995

TO ALL CONGREGATIONS

Dear Brothers:

Jehovah has richly blessed the efforts of his people to improve their relationship with the medical and legal communities. As a result, it is now much easier to get respectful, capable medical treatment. This has greatly relieved the anxieties that used to accompany our endeavors to maintain Christian integrity and 'abstain from blood.' This accomplishment is in many respects due to the work of our congregation elders and the elders on the Hospital Liaison Committees (HLCs). They have indeed been for us "like a hiding place from the wind and . . . like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land."—Acts 15:28, 29; Isa. 32:1, 2.

We now have 118 HLCs in the major cities here in the United States, and over 700 elders serve on these committees. More than 1,000 HLCs are functioning around the world, with the program now in operation in all 100 branches of the Society. This means that our brothers in 232 lands all have access to this arrangement. Our computerized listing of cooperative doctors shows more than 19,000 in the United States. The worldwide listing from all the branches reports more than 50,000 doctors working with us. Much of this progress is due to the fine presentations made by our HLCs to groups of doctors at leading hospitals all over the world. There are more than 40 hospitals in the United States and about 35 in other lands that now offer us a bloodless medicine and surgery program.

It seems appropriate, while sharing this good news with you, to remind you (1) of some vital things that you need to do when preparing to go to a hospital for health care, and (2) how you can, when you request their assistance, best cooperate with the HLCs and your local elders. Indeed, there are some things it is wise to do even before any such situation develops. A list of suggestions will now be read to you. It will later be posted on the information board, and you may make copies of it or ask the congregation secretary to make you a copy.

We hope the above information is of help to you as you show yourselves determined to uphold Jehovah's righteous law.

Your brothers,

*Watchtower B. & T. Society*

OF NEW YORK, INC.

Hospital Information Services

Enclosure

## THINGS TO BE SURE TO DO WHEN YOU PREPARE TO CHECK INTO A HOSPITAL

Since no one can predict when he may be rushed to a hospital to save his life, or when a stay in a hospital for some supposedly "minor" matter may suddenly turn into a serious confrontation over the blood issue, then, it would be wise to:

- Always have your signed, witnessed, and updated Advance Medical Directive on your person. IT IS BEST NEVER TO CALL THIS A "BLOOD CARD"; some may misunderstand that expression.
- Let your elders know anytime you are entering a hospital for treatment.
- Talk to the doctor, the surgeon, and the anesthesiologist to make sure that they are willing to treat you without using blood. (Do not think that you can avoid such a discussion if you do not want blood.)
- Upon admission to the hospital, right away and without any hesitation identify yourself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. If possible, have an elder accompany you to help you fill out needed documents stating your desire to be treated without blood. (Hospitals usually have forms for 'release from liability,' etc. If the hospital claims not to have these forms and you are in a dire emergency where treatment is being delayed or even denied, the elder accompanying you may, at your direction, call the HLC and have them bring or fax a form to the hospital.)
- Any hospital forms you sign should be very carefully read FIRST, so that you do not inadvertently give the hospital permission to use blood in some actual or pretended emergency. Their forms usually have a clause that nullifies everything you have said about not wanting blood. You have the legal right to cross out any such wording and write in what you want the form to say, initialing each such adjustment. Make a copy of that adjusted form for yourself in case any problems arise later. If someone tries to prevent you from adjusting the form, ask to speak to the hospital's administrator or its attorney. Do not delay in getting these forms properly filled out. (For details on the care of children, see the September 1992 Our Kingdom Ministry insert.)

As indicated above, you will find it in your best interests to communicate with the elders about your medical needs. If after their assessment it appears necessary to do so, they will, with your approval, call the HLC for help, perhaps to locate a cooperative doctor. Local elders understand that they are to assist you in these ways, so that you are not alone on any required follow-through. This is when you need their loving aid and encouragement to stand firm.—Eccl. 4:9, 10, 12.