

A2.7.11 Administration of Blood Products

**Refusal of Blood Products**

Purpose

To provide medical and nursing staff with guidance if a patient **refuses the medical treatment of blood transfusion, for religious or personal reasons**. This is to be read in conjunction with **Barwon Health 's Refusal of Medical Treatment policy (A.2.##) under the Medical Treatment Act 1988**.

Policy

The principles are:

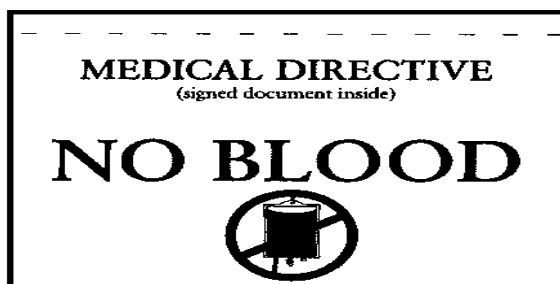
1. A **fully informed, competent adult patient** is entitled to make the decision to accept medical treatment or **refuse treatment**, except palliative care which cannot be refused under the Act.
2. There is an obligation of clinical staff to **provide the patient with all the information necessary** so the patient may make an **informed decision** and then answer any relevant questions the patient may have.
3. Clinical staff have an obligation to be satisfied that the patient is fully informed prior to the patient making a decision to refuse treatment. The existence of a medical directive does not automatically mean the patient carrying it will refuse treatment. If a patient is conscious and competent staff should enquire as to what blood products the patient will accept or refuse. If the patient is unconscious or not competent to make an informed decision the staff should make every effort to notify next of kin or other representatives to discuss treatment options.
4. Clinical staff **must accept and act on the patient's informed decision irrespective of their personal beliefs and opinions**.
5. In the case of patients who are **children, there are specific legal requirements** and the medical director should be contacted for assistance. In all cases involving children, the **interests and welfare of the child is paramount**.

Scope

This policy applies to Medical Officers and Registered Nurses Division 1.

Procedure

Most Jehovah's Witnesses carry a **Medical Directive** that identifies whom to contact in case of emergency, any allergies, current medication or medical problems. The Medical Directive clearly states the patient's view on the non-administration of blood products.



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Following a verbal refusal of blood products for personal reasons or a written medical directive from Jehovah Witnesses, medical staff should ensure this is either **documented** in the **medical record** or complete a **“Refusal of Treatment Certificate- Competent Person” (MR ##)** This certificate can be cancelled at any time.

If a Refusal Treatment Certificate is completed, a **copy must be sent to the CEO and the certificate placed in the patient’s history** – the Doctor who is involved with the refusal should also notify the Hospital **Blood Bank**, so that a **permanent alert** for that patient can be noted in the Laboratory Computer system. A **notation should be made on the alert sheet in the front of the patient’s medical history**.

**Early involvement of the haematology service is recommended when high-risk Jehovah’s Witness patients are admitted and likely to require haemostatic and haemopoetic support.**

Where possible **review non-blood medical alternatives** and treat the patient without using homologous blood (blood from a donor).

If an adult patient is unconscious and does not have a **medical directive /refusal treatment certificate**, but you have reason to believe he / she is a Jehovah’s Witness, every reasonable effort should be made to contact next of kin. If unable to contact next of kin, treat, as per clinically necessary and two (2) doctors need to agree and document the management plan.

### **Children: (i.e. less than 14 years old)**

Whose parents refuse to give consent for treatment by way of a blood product transfusion and, if in the opinion of the treating doctor the child is likely to die, the procedure set out in **Section 24 of the Human Tissue Act** should be followed:

**Briefly this procedure involves a second doctor personally examining the patient to decide whether he / she agrees with the clinical opinion of the doctor in charge of the patient. If the two (2) doctors agree a blood product transfusion is reasonable and proper treatment for the life-threatening condition suffered by the patient, then the treatment can be given irrespective of the parents’ wishes.**

Jehovah’s Witnesses **will** accept:

- **Non-blood volume expanders** such as Gelofusine, Haemaccel, Normal Saline, Hartman’s Solution, Ringers Lactate, Dextran, etc.

But **will not accept**:

- **Whole blood transfusions.**
- Transfusions of **MAJOR blood components**, e.g. Packed red blood cells, plasma, platelets and white blood cells.
- **Pre and intra-operative STORAGE of blood** for later autologous transfusion.

**Each Jehovah’s Witness** must decide **personally according to conscience** whether he / she will **accept** the following:

#### **Products:**

- **Small blood fractions** such as immunoglobulins, haemophiliac preparations (Factor VIII, Prothrombinex, etc.) and albumin.

#### **Surgical techniques:**

Which require the use of a continuous extracorporeal circuit e.g.

- Heart-lung by-pass
- Dialysis
- Haemofiltration
- Haemodilution
- Intra and post-operative blood salvage and re-infusion

As in all cases the discussions and examinations involved in this process must be fully and accurately documented in the patients history. **Appendix 1 will assist you to make a comprehensive list of**

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products accepted or refused in conjunction with the Refusal of Treatment Certificate- Competent Person" (MR ##).

### Reference:

1. Bendigo Health Care Group Policy & Procedure Medical Treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses including potential Blood Products, 2004.
2. Western Health Medical information sheet –Jehovah's Witness, 2004
3. Jehovah's Witnesses Guidelines for their non-blood medical management.

### Appendix 1:

#### Blood and Blood products and supportive treatment

- Red Cell components
- Fresh frozen plasma
- Platelet concentrates
- Cryoprecipitate components
- All Human Clotting Factor products
- Biostate
- MonoFIX-VF
- Prothrombinex-HT
- Thrombotrol-VF
- Albumex 4%
- Albumex 20%
- Immunoglobulins-
  - Hepatitis B
  - Tetanus
  - CMV
  - Zoster
- Intragam P
- Sandoglobulin
- Rh (D) Immunoglobulin
- Win Rho
- Autologous blood
  - Autologous Donation
  - Acute Normovolemic haemodilution
  - Cell saver
  - Continuous Pulmonary bypass

#### Non Blood Products

- Crystalloid fluid
- Synthetic colloid fluid
- 'Recombinant' (Factor VIII)
- Recombinant rVIIa – 'Novo seven' – Haematology approval required
- EPO