

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

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Statement to the media

An article published in the June 14, 2000, issue of a British newspaper has incorrectly publicized what it feels to be a major change in the religious doctrine of Jehovah's Witnesses regarding blood transfusions. In order to correct the misinformation, Jehovah's Witnesses are providing the following statement.

The Bible commands Christians to "abstain . . . from blood." (Acts 15:20). Jehovah's Witnesses believe that it is not possible to abstain from blood and accept blood transfusions. They have consistently refused donor blood ever since transfusions began to be widely used in civilian medical practice in the 1940s, and this scriptural position has not changed.

If one of Jehovah's Witnesses is transfused against his or her will, Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that this constitutes a sin on the part of the individual. This position has not changed.

If one of Jehovah's Witnesses accepts a blood transfusion in a moment of weakness and then later regrets the action, this would be considered a serious matter. Spiritual assistance would be offered to help the person regain spiritual strength. This position has not changed.

If a baptized member of the faith willfully and without regret accepts blood transfusions, he indicates by his own actions that he no longer wishes to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The individual revokes his own membership by his own actions, rather than the congregation initiating this step. This represents a procedural change instituted in April 2000 in which the congregation no longer initiates the action to revoke membership in such cases. However, the end result is the same: the individual is no longer viewed as one of Jehovah's Witnesses because he no longer accepts and follows a core tenet of the faith. However, if such an individual later changes his mind, he may be accepted back as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. This position has not changed.

Jehovah's Witnesses seek quality medical care and accept medical alternatives to blood transfusions. Support is given to members to help them obtain medical treatment that respects their religious convictions.

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