



Royal Papworth Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

**DEPARTMENT OF ANAESTHESIA
AND INTENSIVE CARE**

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16th January 2024

FAO Wayne Sorsby (Associate Director)
Hospital Information Services for Jehovah's Witnesses | UK and Ireland

Dear Wayne

I am a consultant anaesthetist at Royal Papworth Hospital in Cambridge. I qualified in Medicine in 1993 from the University of London with the MBBS (Hons) degree and finished my specialist qualifications with the Royal College of Anaesthetists and Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine in 1999, awarded FRCA and FFICM. I was admitted onto the Specialist Register in 2003 after working as an Associate Professor at the University of Toronto and started at Royal Papworth Hospital in September 2023 as a Consultant, and also lectured at the University of Cambridge from 2006. I was the Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Anaesthesia*, the top-ranked journal in its field, from 2015 to 2023 and was appointed as the Macintosh Professor of Anaesthetics by the Royal College of Anaesthetists in 2021. I am now the Vice-President of the Association of Anaesthetists, the membership organisation for > 10,000 anaesthetists in UK and Ireland. I was awarded the John Snow Silver Medal for services to Anaesthesia in the UK in 2023.

I was the Chair of our Hospital Transfusion Committee from 2004 to 2010 and led many initiatives to reduce blood transfusion including surgery without the use of blood and I started liaising with the Hospital Information Services for Jehovah's Witnesses at that time to develop non-blood protocols, and many patients benefitted from these protocols. I introduced routine cell salvage and pre-operative optimisation of haemoglobin with intravenous iron and erythropoietin.

I have conducted a number of research trials looking to reduce or eliminate transfusion in patients undergoing major surgery and the effect on outcomes including reduced stay in hospital and reduced complications and reduced mortality (death rate). I have also authored a number of major reviews and led three important national and international Guidelines – see Annex below.

During the preparation and writing of the international Guidelines about the care of Jehovah's Witnesses and patients who refuse blood which I chaired, we worked very closely with two Witnesses who were extremely helpful and polite throughout, and this was felt to be a massively important contribution by the Association of Anaesthetists and other specialty representatives. In fact, in all my dealings with Jehovah's Witnesses who represented them for the hospital and region and the UK, they have always been helpful, collaborative, useful and polite and I have no hesitation in working with them.

In my view, many surgical procedures CAN be undertaken without the need for blood transfusion, and this is reflected in the literature including many papers written by my research group and others. The use of intravenous iron, erythropoietin, cell salvage and factor concentrates has been shown to be safe, effective and highly advantageous and there is no scientific doubt that Surgery



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WITHOUT blood transfusion is associated with better outcomes for patients, including of course Jehovah's Witnesses. Patients who attend for surgery who are Jehovah's Witnesses are extremely well informed about their options and surgical and medical treatment and it has always been a privilege to look after them. In addition, Jehovah's Witnesses who bring their children to hospital for surgery have always been well informed and very caring and compassionate when dealing with them and their children. The Hospital Information Services have been helpful in discussing options for treatment and consent and have always been available and courteous when contacting them.

Overall, my clinical and research experience has taught me that blood transfusion is rarely needed even during major surgery and that many alternatives are available, and that patients often have better outcomes if blood transfusion is avoided. In fact, our Jehovah's Witnesses patients have had the best outcomes of any patient group and I am always happy to consult with and look after them and their children if they need surgery.

Yours Sincerely

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ANNEX

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