



STATEMENT DJ085

Watchtower Issues New Instructions On Blood

The Watchtower Society has issued new instructions requiring Jehovah's Witnesses to offer greater resistance to court-ordered blood transfusions.

The June 15, 1991 *Watchtower* magazine (p. 31) suggests that JW's "avoid being accessible" for such a court ordered transfusion by fleeing the scene, or else follow the example of a 12-year-old girl who had been taught to "fight any court authorized transfusion with all the strength she could muster...scream and struggle...pull the injecting device out of her arm and...attempt to destroy the blood in the bag over her bed."

The *Watchtower* article states that this course is to be followed even if such action might make the Jehovah's Witness "a lawbreaker or make him liable to prosecution" by the authorities. While medical personnel generally agree that adults have the right to refuse treatment, hospitals routinely obtain court orders when children of Jehovah's Witnesses require transfusions and the parents refuse to consent. In the past, many Jehovah's Witness parents appeared content to leave the matter there: they were freed of responsibility in the eyes of their leaders, while at the same time the child's life could be saved. (Watchtower rules mandate the punishment of shunning for any who accept blood willingly.)

But now hospitals can expect many more Jehovah's Witnesses to follow the headline-making course that only a few took in the past. Obedient to the new instructions, Witness parents may either physically intervene to obstruct treatment or else abduct the child from the hospital and flee — regardless of whether this will make them lawbreakers liable to prosecution.

— *David A. Reed*