

## Case Study: Jehovah's Witness and Blood Transfusion

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An eighteen-year-old female presented to the emergency room with ruptured ovarian cysts and hemorrhaging. The patient was accompanied by her mother and sister. She reported having heavy vaginal bleeding for the past two weeks and that her mother insisted she come to the hospital when she began experiencing intractable pain.

The patient was admitted for further workup which indicated that she had profoundly low hemoglobin, blood pressure, and platelet counts. The provider ordered normal saline and two units of blood when she arrived at the unit. When the provider came to discuss the treatment plan with the patient and her family, the patient reported that she was a Jehovah's Witness and refused blood transfusion.

### Reflection:

- What are the beliefs of Jehovah's Witness patients regarding blood products? Describe the patient's rights in this scenario.
- How do you as the nurse support patient autonomy while respecting her religious belief?
- Given the patient's prognosis without receiving a blood transfusion, what members of the interdisciplinary team could be contacted to support them during this time?
- Providers often experience spiritual/religious or emotional distress when their values conflict with those of their patients. If this provider experiences emotional or spiritual distress because of the patient's refusal of certain interventions, where could they seek support?
- Is it the responsibility of medical institutions to provide support for their staff around morally or ethically distressing cases? Why or why not?

### Additional Resources:

Berend, K., & Levi, M. (2009). Management of adult Jehovah's Witness patients with acute bleeding. *The American Journal of Medicine*, 122(12), 1071-1076.

Koenig, H., Koenig, H. G., King, D., & Carson, V. B. (2012). *Handbook of Religion and Health*. New York: Oxford University Press.



National Institutes of Health (NIH) (2017). Patient bill of rights.

[https://clinicalcenter.nih.gov/participate/patientinfo/legal/bill\\_of\\_rights.html](https://clinicalcenter.nih.gov/participate/patientinfo/legal/bill_of_rights.html)