



**OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY
CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE**

Blood products and / or components: Refusal of

Scope (Staff):	WNHS Obstetrics and Gynaecology Directorate staff
Scope (Area):	Obstetrics and Gynaecology Directorate clinical areas at KEMH

This document should be read in conjunction with this [Disclaimer](#)

Aims

- Early identification of women who decline transfusion of blood component / product(s)
- Documentation of acceptable treatment options and initiation of a management plan

Background

A competent adult may refuse to consent to receive a transfusion of a blood component and / or blood product(s) for religious or personal beliefs. See [WA Health Consent To Treatment Policy](#).¹

The management of obstetric and gynaecology patients who refuse blood component / product(s) presents a challenge due to the potential for major haemorrhage. Mortality and morbidity is higher than in the general population.^{2,3} Advance planning is needed to provide information, identify the blood components / products that the patient will accept or decline, and discuss what alternatives are available in the event of major haemorrhage.

Pre-existing anaemia amplifies the impact of blood loss and proactive management of iron deficiency anaemia is essential to optimise the patient's own red cell mass. See WNHS Clinical Guideline, Obstetrics and Gynaecology: [Anaemia and Iron Deficiency Management](#).

Advance Health Directive

An Advance Health Directive (AHD) is a written expression of the person's wishes in relation to medical treatment which comes into effect if the person loses their capacity.

An Advance Health Directive can come into effect if that person is unable to make reasonable judgments about their treatment at a later time, due to unconsciousness or other circumstances. See [WNHS Policy: Advance Health Directives](#).



The majority of baptised Jehovah's Witnesses in Australia will be well versed with blood component refusal and carry an AHD / Blood Card which identifies their individual treatment decisions regarding blood components / products and acceptable alternatives. Non-baptised Jehovah's Witnesses may not have an AHD.

Women declining blood who do not have an AHD can download and complete an AHD from [WA Health Advance Care Planning Resources](#) or choose not to complete an AHD.

Health professionals needing more information on Jehovah's Witnesses can contact the CNC PBM phone 6458 2733 or page 3257, or access Hospital Information Services for Jehovah's Witnesses or Hospital Liaison Committee for Jehovah's Witnesses.

Medical Officers may give blood product / component(s) to women **without** an AHD in life-threatening circumstances where she is unable to provide consent, even if relatives indicate the woman is a Jehovah's Witness. No other person is legally able to consent to or refuse treatment on the woman's behalf. See [WA Health Consent To Treatment Policy](#)¹.

Healthcare professionals must respect the wishes of each individual woman and bear in mind that she has the right to change her mind at any time.

[See Quick Reference Flowchart \(on page 4 of this document\)](#)

Key points

1. Women should be informed of all the blood products and components available and ascertain the individual components, products and treatments which are acceptable or not acceptable. The discussion **MUST** be recorded clearly in the medical record and the MR 295.98 checklist completed ('Checklist of Discussion for Patients Declining Blood / Blood Product Support').
2. Women should be counselled about their increased risk of death and morbidity in the event of haemorrhage. Thresholds / triggers for intervention may differ to that of other patients.
3. Maternity patients should be advised that hysterectomy may be required to control bleeding if limitations are placed on blood component / product(s) transfusion:
 - Active management of the third stage of labour is strongly advocated and needs to be discussed and documented prior to birth
 - Document management on the **Obstetric Special Instruction Sheet** (MR004)
4. A copy of the woman's AHD (including the acceptance of death before receiving blood components), must be filed in her medical record (purple tab divider) and a purple AHD sticker placed on the current **Special Instruction Sheet** (MR 004 (obstetric) or 005 (gynaecology)).
5. Effective management of anaemia is essential to optimise the patient's haemoglobin prior to birth of the baby or surgery. See Clinical Guidelines, O&G:
 - [Anaemia and Iron Deficiency Management](#)
 - [Iron Therapy: Intravenous](#)

Obstetric patients

Antenatal care

- An e-Referral is sent to Haematology - CNC Patient Blood Management [HABL]
- ANC or ANT 451 (Nurse-led Haematology Clinic) consultation is facilitated by CNC PBM
- See the following for further management planning. WNHS Clinical Guidelines:
 - Obstetrics and Gynaecology: [Complex Care Planning](#)
 - Anaesthesia and Pain Medicine: [Pre- Operative Consultation and Investigation](#) and [Intraoperative Cell Salvage](#)

Intrapartum care

The Obstetric and Anaesthetic Senior Registrar MUST be notified immediately when a woman who has refused blood products is admitted. See also Obstetrics and Gynaecology guidelines:

- [Labour: Moderate and High Risk Women Presenting at MFAU and LBS](#)
- [Caesarean Birth](#)

Postpartum haemorrhage

- Management as per Clinical Guideline, Obstetrics and Gynaecology (Restricted Area Guideline) [Postpartum Complications](#) (WA Health employee access through HealthPoint).
- Rapid and definitive management of obstetric bleeding should be undertaken according to the cause of the blood loss (oxytocics and other uterotonic agents, EUA, intrauterine haemostatic balloon insertion, embolisation, laparotomy, B-Lynch suture, uterine artery ligation, internal iliac artery ligation, hysterectomy).
- In the presence of haemorrhage, the decision to proceed to laparotomy should be taken earlier than is usual.
- Surgical decisions at laparotomy need to be taken rapidly, before the onset of Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation if possible.
- The woman and her family must be kept fully informed of events in a nonjudgmental way.

Oncology and gynaecology patients

- Oncology and Gynaecology patients attending PAC prior to surgery are seen by the CNC PBM either face to face, or if a country patient then a phone consultation is completed and then the patient is seen on day of surgery for remaining paperwork completion.
- The CNC PBM is usually contacted by the PAC staff.

If an intravenous iron infusion is recommended or required at any time please contact the CNC PBM via pager 3257 or phone 82733 or send an e-referral to 'Haematology- CNC PBM iron infusion [HAIF]'

Flowchart: Women refusing blood components / blood products

Planned admission

- Medical staff or CNC Patient Blood Management discussion to ascertain (in detail) the individual blood component/product(s) and alternatives which are acceptable and not acceptable
- Follow “Checklist for discussion for patients declining blood product support” (MR 295.98)
- Document the discussion clearly in the medical notes together with a signed “Refusal to Permit Blood Transfusion” (MR 295.99)
- Obtain a copy of the Advance Health Directive and file in medical notes, under a purple tab divider and attach a purple AHD sticker to the current special instructions form
- Check blood tests as below



Obstetric management plan

- Send an e-referral to CNC PBM for triage, assessment and management
- Other specialists may be required
- Obstetrician, Anaesthetist
 - Haematologist (coagulation disorders, anaemia)
 - Physician (pre-existing medical disease)
 - MFM (woman/foetus requiring highly specialised obstetric care)

Gynaecology management plan

- Send an e-referral to CNC PBM for triage, assessment and management
- Other specialists may be required
- Gynaecologist, Anaesthetist
 - Haematologist (coagulation disorders, anaemia)
 - Physician (pre-existing medical disease)

Initial blood tests

- Full blood picture and iron studies
- B12 / folate studies
- Coagulation screen
- Other tests directed by Haematologist, Physician, Obstetrician or Anaesthetist

Optimise haematological parameters

- Discuss dietary and oral iron
- Consider ceasing antiplatelet / anticoagulant therapy in non-pregnant women with non-complex medical disease. Liaise with managing specialist.
- Treat anaemia / iron deficiency anaemia (iron, folate, B12). Intravenous administration of iron

Unplanned admissions:

- **Immediately inform:** Senior Obstetrician / Gynaecologist / Anaesthetist
- Check that a “Refusal to Permit Blood Transfusion” form (MR295.99) is completed
- Check, copy and file AHD if supplied
- Contact CNC PBM (M-F 0700-1530)

References

1. WA Health Consent to Treatment Policy. Perth: Department of Health WA; 2016.
2. Lewis G. Saving mothers lives: Reviewing maternal deaths to make motherhood safer: 2006-2008: The eighth report of the confidential enquiries into maternal deaths in the United Kingdom. **BJOG / CMACE**. 2011;118, Supp 1. Available from: <http://www.hqip.org.uk/assets/NCAPOP-Library/CMACE-Reports/6.-March-2011-Saving-Mothers-Lives-reviewing-maternal-deaths-to-make-motherhood-safer-2006-2008.pdf>
3. Van Wolfswinkel M, Zwart J, Schutte J, Duvekot J, Pel M, Van Roosmalen J. Maternal mortality and serious maternal morbidity in Jehovah's witnesses in the Netherlands. **BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology**. 2009;116(8):1103-10.

Bibliography

- Effa-Heap G. Blood transfusion: Implications of treating a Jehovah's Witness patient. *Br J of Nursing*. 2009;18(3):174-77.
- Gyamfi C, Gyamfi MM, Berkowitz RL. Ethical and medicolegal considerations in the obstetric care of a Jehovah's Witness. *Obstet Gynecol*. 2003;102(1):173-80.

Related legislation and policies

Department of Health: [WA Health Consent to Treatment Policy](#)

Related WNHS policies, procedures and guidelines

WNHS Policy: [Advance Health Directives](#) (WA Health employee access via HealthPoint)

WNHS Clinical Guidelines:

Anaesthesia and Pain Medicine (WA Health employee access via HealthPoint):

- [Intraoperative Cell Salvage](#)
- [Pre-operative Consultation and Investigation](#)

Obstetrics and Gynaecology:

- [Anaemia Management During Pregnancy and the Postnatal Period](#)
- [Caesarean Birth](#)
- [Complex Care Planning](#)
- [Iron Therapy: Intravenous](#)
- [Labour: Moderate and High Risk Women Presenting at MFAU and Labour Birth Suite](#)
- [Postpartum Complications \(PPH\)](#)

Useful resources (including related forms)

Department of Health WA:

- [Advance Care Planning e-Learning](#)
- [Advance Care Planning Resources](#)

Forms:

MR 004 or 005 (Obstetric or Gynaecology) Special Instruction Sheet

MR 295.98 Checklist of Discussion for Patients Declining Blood / Blood Product Support

MR 295.99 Refusal to Permit Blood Transfusion

Keywords:	refusal blood components or products, Jehovah Witness, refusal blood transfusion		
Document owner:	Obstetrics and Gynaecology Directorate		
Author / Reviewer:	Clinical Nurse Consultant Patient Blood Management		
Date first issued:	October 2004 (originally titled as 'B: 2.14 Guidelines For The Management Of Jehovah's Witness Women In Obstetrics')		
Reviewed dates: (since July 2016)	Sept 2006; Sept 2009; June 2012; Feb 2013; Aug 2013; July 2016; Sept 2021	Next review date:	Sept 2024
Approved by:	Blood Management Committee, KEMH	Date:	03/08/2021
	Head of Department Obstetrics, KEMH	Date:	17/08/2021
Endorsed by:	Obstetrics and Gynaecology Directorate Management Committee [OOS approved with Medical and Midwifery Co directors]	Date:	06/09/2021
NSQHS Standards (v2) applicable:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  1: Clinical Governance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  2: Partnering with Consumers <input type="checkbox"/>  3: Preventing and Controlling Healthcare Associated Infection <input type="checkbox"/>  4: Medication Safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  5: Comprehensive Care <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  6: Communicating for Safety <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  7: Blood Management <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>  8: Recognising and Responding to Acute Deterioration	
Printed or personally saved electronic copies of this document are considered uncontrolled. Access the current version from WNHS HealthPoint.			

Version history

Date	Summary
Prior to July 2016	Archived- contact OGD Guideline Coordinator for previous versions. Original titled as B.2.14: 'Management of Women who Refuse Blood Components and / or Blood Products, including Jehovah's Witnesses'
July 2016	Titled 'Refusal of Blood Components and / or Products: Management'
Sept 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background section links to information on blood and blood product refusal in the WA Health Consent to Treatment Policy, information on AHD and links added. Referral method now e-referral Expanded language to be inclusive of non-obstetric patients Quick reference flowchart added Removed content for antenatal, intrapartum, Caesarean and PPH – now links to related guidelines

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

© North Metropolitan Health Service 2021

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.

www.nmhs.health.wa.gov.au