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# MailOnline

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## Pregnant Jehovah's Witness and her baby die after she refused a blood transfusion, chemotherapy and a C-section due to her religious beliefs

- **Jehovah's Witness and her baby have died after refusing blood transfusion**
- **The 28-year-old suffered from leukemia but refused treatment due to beliefs**
- **Over 80 per cent of treated pregnant leukemia sufferers go into remission**
- **Doctors and staff have described the distressing scene after the baby died and then the woman suffered a fatal stroke and multi-organ failure**

By [Sarah Michael](#) and [Lucy-mae Beers For Daily Mail Australia](#)

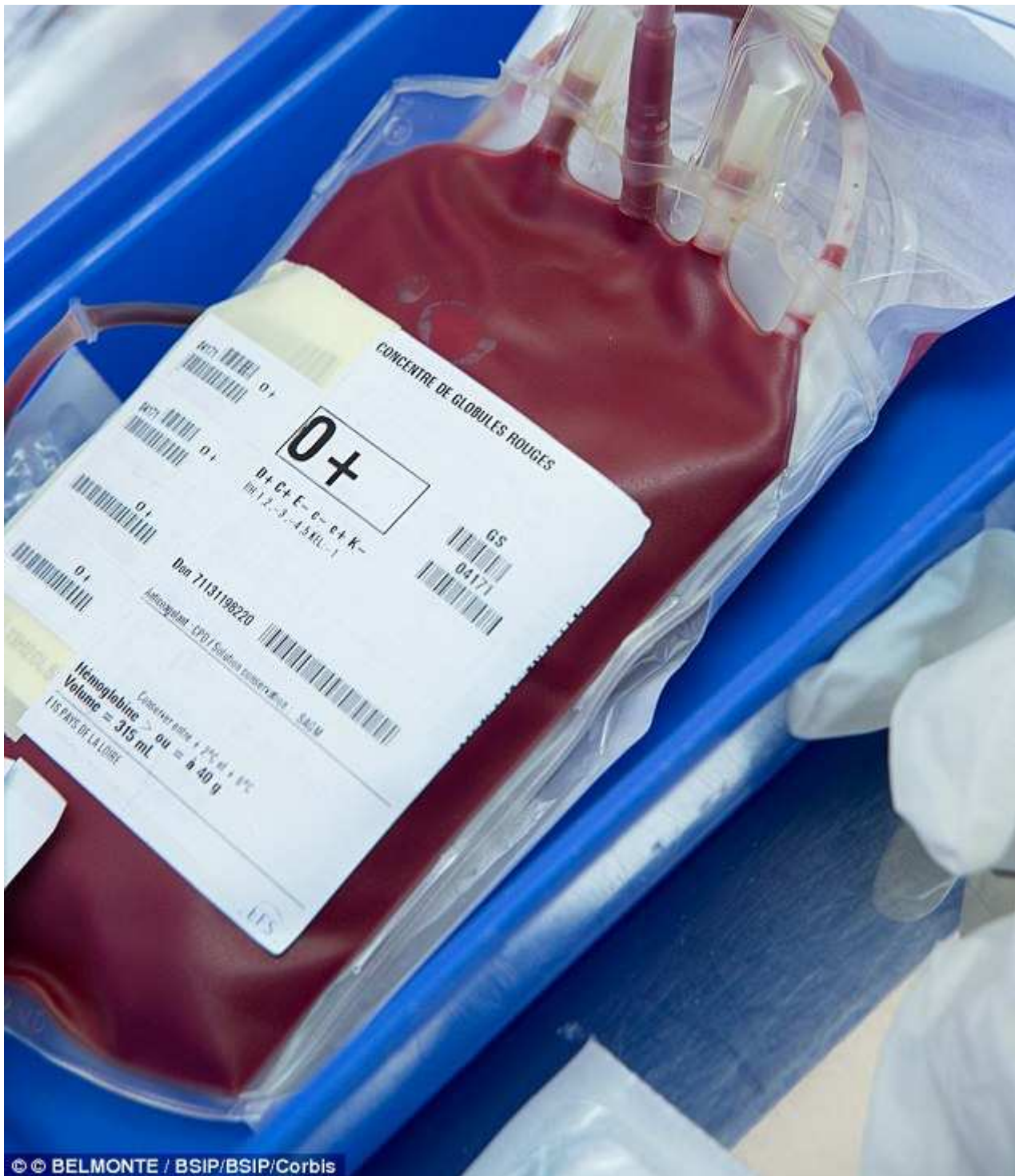
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A heavily pregnant Jehovah's Witness woman and her baby died after she was diagnosed with leukemia but refused a blood transfusion that would probably have saved both of their lives.

The 28-year-old was diagnosed with the cancer seven months into her pregnancy, and doctors told her she could give birth via a caesarean section and undergo chemotherapy but both would require her to have a blood transfusion.

The Sydney woman refused both options due to her religious beliefs and her baby died in utero three days later. She had a stillbirth and died 13 days after her diagnosis after suffering a stroke and multi-organ failure.





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A pregnant Jehovah's Witness woman and her baby have died after she refused a blood transfusion

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Her treating haematologist at the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick, Dr Giselle Kidson-Gerber, said the mother understood the risks of her refusal to accept blood.

'Her refusal to receive a blood transfusion meant that we were unable to perform a caesarean section and to deliver the foetus,' Dr Kidson-Gerber told Daily Mail Australia.

'Obviously it's a very big ethical issue. Legally in Australia the mother has the right to make decisions on her behalf and her foetus's behalf.

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'Most mothers would make decisions in favour of the unborn baby and this was a decision that was not in favour of the unborn baby.'

Dr Kidson-Gerber added: 'If we were to give chemotherapy without blood transfusion support she surely would have died.'

Hospital staff were 'distressed' over what were perceived to be two avoidable deaths, as 83 percent of pregnant leukemia sufferers go into remission with treatment.

Dr Kidson-Gerber said it was a challenge to respect a patient who refuses life-saving treatment.

'It was sad. I think that I did my best to help her. But ultimately I couldn't change the course of events,' she said.



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**The 28-year-old had pregnancy complications due to her leukemia but rejected treatment on religious grounds**

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In a recent article published in the Internal Medicine Journal about the 2009 case, Dr Kidson-Gerber and her colleague Dr Amber Biscoe wrote: 'Not administering blood products in this case undoubtedly contributed to the death of mother and foetus.'

'Refusal of a lifesaving intervention by an informed patient is generally well respected, but the rights of a mother to refuse such interventions on behalf of her foetus is more controversial.'

Sascha Callaghan, an expert in ethics and law at the University of Sydney said the current law allows the mother to make decisions that would directly affect her unborn baby, the [Sydney Morning Herald](#) reported.

She said Jehovah's Witnesses are often condemned for their beliefs, especially in relation to their stance against blood transfusions.

'This woman has a long-held commitment to the Jehovah's Witness faith and that's how she chose to die,' she told the Herald.

'When your foetus is in utero, it is inextricably tied to your life.'



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The woman was being treated at the Royal Hospital for Women and the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick

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Jehovah's Witnesses refuse blood transfusions because they believe the Bible commands them to abstain from ingesting blood and that avoiding blood pays respect to God as the giver of life.

Read more:

- [Pregnant Jehovah's Witness' decision to refuse treatment 'harrowing' for hospital staff after mother and baby die](#)



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