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EUROPE

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## Jehovah's Witness objects to wife's blood transfusion

**A man whose wife urgently needs medical treatment has objected on religious grounds to hospital staff giving her a transfusion of blood products.**

The couple are both Jehovah's Witnesses and his 27-year-old wife was admitted to a Dublin hospital on Tuesday after suffering a ruptured ectopic pregnancy.

The man said she had signed a written instruction refusing such a treatment, even if her life was in danger.

However, Dublin's High Court has ruled the transfusion should go ahead.

The Irish state broadcaster, RTE, reported that the hospital sought the court order after a dispute arose between the medical staff and patient's husband over her instructions regarding her treatment.

### 'Sedated'

The court was told the woman was admitted to hospital had suffered acute abdominal pain and later collapsed, having lost a significant amount of blood.

Eileen Barrington SC, for the hospital, said the woman had told doctors that she was refusing a transfusion of whole blood or red blood cells but would accept platelets or plasma.

Following her initial blood loss, she was treated with her own recycled blood, using a system known as "cell salvage".

The court was told the patient had since been sedated and was unable to express her wishes.

Lawyers for the hospital said she would remain in that state until a certain procedure was carried out to prevent serious infection, but which could involve further bleeding and the need for a transfusion.

The hospital wanted an order permitting it to make the appropriate transfusion for the procedure because, without that option, doctors had said there was a risk of death or serious lifelong disability.

### 'Core beliefs'

Her emotional husband told the court his wife had signed a document used by Jehovah's Witnesses, known as the Advanced Care Directive, declaring she would never accept platelets or plasma, even if not having the treatment would result in her death.

He said he believed, because his wife was in such terrible pain, it was really hard for her to reason but it was one of their core beliefs not to accept primary blood components of red or white blood cells or plasma and platelets.

However, he said that she would accept "minor fractions" of blood.

The man said he knew his wife of eight years well and she had filled in three Advanced Care Directives over a number of years stating her beliefs, signing the most recent in August 2012.

"At a time when she cannot make up her mind, that is what it [the directive] is there for," he said.

But Ms Barrington said the hospital was contending that the wishes expressed by the woman to doctors on Tuesday evening should supersede the wishes expressed in the directive.

Granting an order allowing the hospital administer non-red blood transfusions, the judge said it seemed to him, from evidence given to the court by doctors, the woman had the capacity to amend her directive when she told medical staff on Tuesday that she would accept plasma or platelets.

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