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Ghana: Jehovah's Witnesses Lady Dies - After Rejecting Blood Transfusion

By Alfred Adams

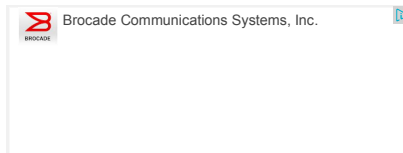
Takoradi — It appears that despite all the effort the government is putting in place to ensure that the health of every Ghanaian is secured, some people continue to allow their religious beliefs to stand in their way.

Forty-one year old Rebecca Dankwa is one such person who has allowed her religious belief to stand in her way to life, after refusing to accept blood transfusion to enable her live.

Rebecca, who had already given birth to eight children, refused to take the advice of medical doctors at the Akontombra Government Hospital in the Western Region to allow them administer blood transfusion on her, after losing so much blood in the process of delivering her ninth baby.

It was a worrisome and sorrowful sight last Wednesday, when the medical doctors helplessly watched poor Rebecca fight relentlessly for her life without success, simply because she refused to take professional medical advice, saying her religious belief forbids that.

The dying woman was, however, able to deliver her ninth child, who is currently safe and alive at the Akontombra Government Hospital, in the care of her grandmother. The 41year old mother would still be alive if she had listened to advice and warnings from the medical doctors to allow the blood transfusion process to be conducted on her to replenish all the blood she had lost while to delivering.



Rebecca Dankwa and her mother, believed to be worshipping at the Jehovah's Witnesses Church, stubbornly refused to heed the advice of the medical professionals.

However, when they eventually agreed that the blood transfusion could be done on her, it was already too late.

The Administrator of the hospital, Mr. Nicholas Anane, who confirmed the story, added that looking at the age of the deceased, she was classified as a high risk pregnancy, because of the number of times she had delivered. He told this reporter in a telephone interview that though the woman delivered safely, she began bleeding profusely, which was normal, because she fell under the high risk pregnancy classification.

Mr. Annan continued that due to excessive bleeding by the deceased, it was necessary to replenish her through a blood transfusion. He said when the deceased was advised that given her situation the only way she could be saved was for her to go through the blood transfusion process, together with her mother, they flatly rejected the advice, on grounds that their religion forbids blood transfusions, though they knew the risk.

Drama

When it became critical that Rebecca Dankwa could lose her life if she continued to ignorantly stick to her guns, she ultimately gave in for the blood transfusion to be done on her. It was nonetheless, too late, according to Mr. Annan, because she had already lost too much blood.

Information available to The Chronicle indicates that a few years ago, Rebecca allowed medical doctors to conduct a blood transfusion on her at the same hospital during child birth, and was ex-communicated from her Church for going contrary to its beliefs.

It took the leaders of the community, and the chiefs from her hometown, to intervene for her to be reinstated into the Church. It is, perhaps, for this reason that she might have rejected advice from the medical doctors to allow the process to be conducted on her once again to save her life, Mr. Annan explained.

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