

# Injured woman chooses faith over blood transfusion

## Grain Valley resident dies after surgery

By Scott Williams  
Of The Examiner

Some say Mary E. Williams did not have to die.

Others say she had no choice.

The 49-year-old Grain Valley woman died last weekend in a Blue Springs hospital bed, refusing a blood transfusion because of her religious beliefs.

Williams was a Jehovah's Witness, a religion whose teachings say it is wrong to receive transfusions.

So when the mother of four suffered a fractured pelvis in a factory accident last Friday, she told doctors at St. Mary's Hospital of Blue Springs not to give her any transfusions.

The next day, she was dead.

According to the Jackson County medical examiner who performed an autopsy, Williams virtually bled to death.

Dr. John Overman said his posthumous examination showed that she suffered a "profound" loss of blood due to internal bleeding caused by the injuries.

Asked whether she could have been saved with transfusions, Overman said: "My feeling is that she could have been, had she accepted the therapy."

Members of the Jehovah's Witness faith believe it is sinful to use the blood of



Mary Williams  
... injured in  
work accident

another person, because that represents the taking of life itself.

Jeff Williams said his mother never wavered in her determination to reject blood transfusions, even after doctors at St.

Mary's Hospital last weekend warned that her life was in danger.

"The issue with us is not a medical one," said Williams, 31, also a Jehovah's Witness. "We are willing to obey God and lose our lives, if necessary."

It is estimated that there are 2,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in the metropolitan area and 500,000 nationwide.

A close friend and neighbor who attended church with Williams and visited her at the hospital said he, too, understands why she refused blood transfusions.

"She felt like that was a requirement that she had to meet to please God," said Larry McConnell, who delivered the eulogy at funeral services Tuesday.

"There was never a question in her mind about what she wanted to do," he added.

McConnell said Williams went to church three days a week and performed the church's familiar door-to-door canvassing another 60 hours each week.

For 14 years, Williams also had worked as a machine operator for a sporting goods manufacturer, Action Products Co. in Odessa.

Company president Bruce Bellington said an internal investigation will be conducted to determine how a moving forklift pinned Williams against a table where she was working about 9 a.m. Friday.

Taken by ambulance to St. Mary's, she underwent surgery there for multiple fractures to the pelvis.

Jeff Williams said his mother was fully

See FAITH, page 8