

Animal derived products may conflict with religious patients' beliefs

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Abstract

Background: Implants and drugs with animal and human derived content are widely used in medicine and surgery, but information regarding ingredients is rarely obtainable by health practitioners. A religious perspective concerning the use of animal and human derived drug ingredients has not thoroughly been investigated. The purpose of this study was to clarify which parts of the medical and surgical treatments offered in western world-hospitals that conflicts with believers of major religions.

Methods: Religious and spiritual leaders of the six largest religions worldwide (18 branches) were contacted. A standardized questionnaire was sent out regarding their position on the use of human and animal derived products in medical and surgical treatments.

Results: Of the 18 contacted religious branches, 10 replied representing the 6 largest religions worldwide. Hindus and Sikhs did not approve of the use of bovine or porcine derived products, and Muslims did not accept the use of porcine derived drugs, dressings or implants. Christians (including Jehovah's Witnesses), Jews and Buddhists accepted the use of all animal and human derived products. However, all religions accepted the use of all these products in case of an emergency and only if alternatives were not available.

Conclusions: The views here suggest that religious codes conflict with some treatment regimens. It is crucial to obtain informed consent from patients for the use of drugs and implants with animal or human derived content. However, information on the origin of ingredients in drugs is not always available to health practitioners