

SPIRITUALITY AND THE WELL-BEING OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

**Patricia A. Parachini, D.Min
Georgetown University
Washington, DC**

INTRODUCTION

Personal Experience as a Hospital Chaplain

- The Place of Spirituality and Religion in my own life
- What I learned: healthcare professionals as well as patients and families need spiritual care

Outline of Presentation

- Discussion of Spirituality and Spiritual Care
- Spiritual Practices and Effects on Stress
- Spirituality and The “New Medicine”
- Changes in Medical and Nursing Schools
- Interviews with Healthcare Professionals
- Summary

SPIRITUALITY

“...recognized as a factor that contributes to health in many persons. This concept is found in all cultures and societies.”

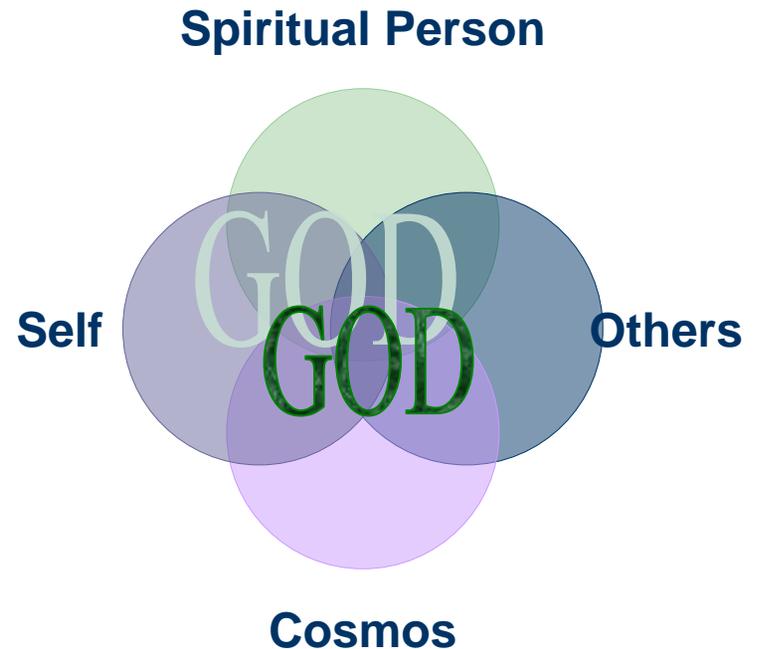
Christina M. Puchalski, MD, Dept. of Medicine and Health Care Sciences, George Washington University, Washington, DC

SPIRITUALITY: All aspects of a person in RELATIONSHIP:

- Oneself
- Others
- Cosmos

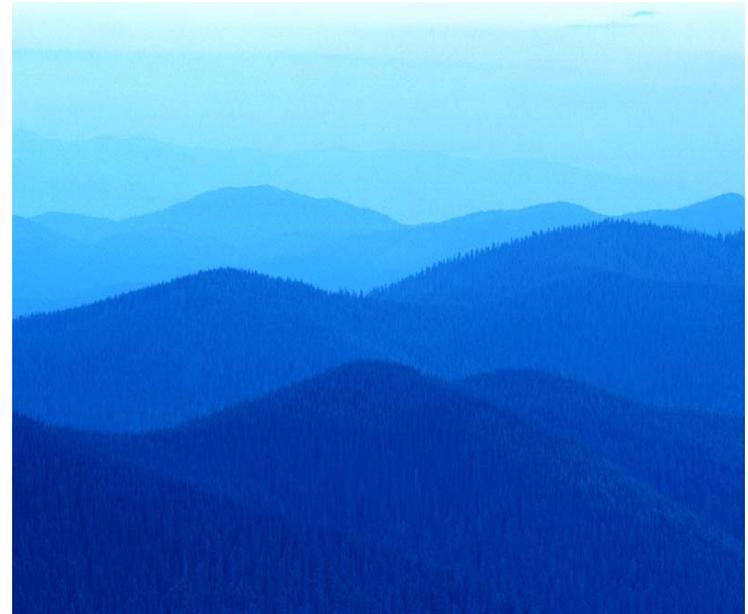
context --- Person in
RELATIONSHIP
to God

...the Compassionate One,
... the Holy One,
... the Transcendent



RELIGION: organized system of beliefs and related practices

- A specific religious tradition, i.e. Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, etc.
- Set practices and rules of conduct related to one's beliefs
- It is the primary way of addressing spiritual needs for many individuals



Spiritual Needs...at the core of being human

Examples...

- ❖ *Need for meaning and purpose*
- ❖ *Need for love and relatedness*
- ❖ *Need to be listened to and heard*
- ❖ *Need for a sense of community*
- ❖ *Need to be respected and valued*
- ❖ *Need for forgiveness*

Spiritual Well-being*

The Focus of Spiritual Care

- “...wellness or health of the totality of the inner resources of people...
- ...the ultimate concerns around which all other values are focused...
- ...the central philosophy of life that guides conduct, and the meaning-giving center of human life which influences all individual and social behavior.”

*David O. Moberg, ed. *Spiritual Well-being: Sociological Perspectives*. Washington, DC, University of America Press, 1979.

Need for spiritual care: patients and healthcare professionals

“The spiritual dimension cannot be ignored, for it is what makes us human.” Viktor E. Frankl

- **Spiritual care addresses the Whole person: mind, body, spirit...SOUL***
- **Spiritual care includes attention to the cognitive and affective, the psyche and the physical**
- **Spiritual care takes many different forms and needs to be integrated into one’s life.**

* In the book, *Hidden Wholeness*, Parker Palmer describes the “Soul” as the whole person including mind, body and spirit.

'Spiritual' Practices

- **Religious Practices in context of a specific belief system ***
 - Praying and reading sacred texts
 - Chanting, music, art and journaling; hymns and fixed vocal prayers
 - Quiet meditation, contemplation or centering prayer
 - Fasting, ritual anointing, blessings, worship services
 - Spiritual guidance from another; group spiritual guidance
- **Mind/Body Work**
 - Guided imagery
 - Meditation and Focusing exercises
 - Healing touch
- **Art and Music Therapy**

* (Note studies done on the effects of prayer and meditation on pain and illness.)

“The New Medicine”

(PBS documentary March 2006)

“...Ground-breaking studies of mind/body connection are proving in the language of science that our emotional state – thoughts and feelings have an enormous influence on physical phenomena like pain, healing and our ability to fight off infection...”

“...Called NEW medicine because there is a new appreciation among medical researchers that we are one complex interconnected organism and to heal involves treating the mind, body and the spirit...”

(Taken from Introduction to documentary)

Spiritual Care and “The New Medicine”

- Spiritual Care, as “The New Medicine,” is holistic - addresses the mind, body and spirit as one.
- Spiritual care includes all the practices and exercises that nurture the ‘Soul’ and assist one to be one’s truest self. The New Medicine draws from all available, proven resources to help a person heal.

Is this approach really new?

Ancient cultures and religious groups sought the healing of the whole person at significant moments.

For example:

- Birthing process
- Serious Illness
- Dying

Use of prayer, healing touch and words of comfort (counsel) by the village “healer” often accompanied persons during these processes, in addition to whatever “medical” procedures were available at the time.

Integrative (Holistic) Medicine

(Taken from website: www.thenewmedicine.org)

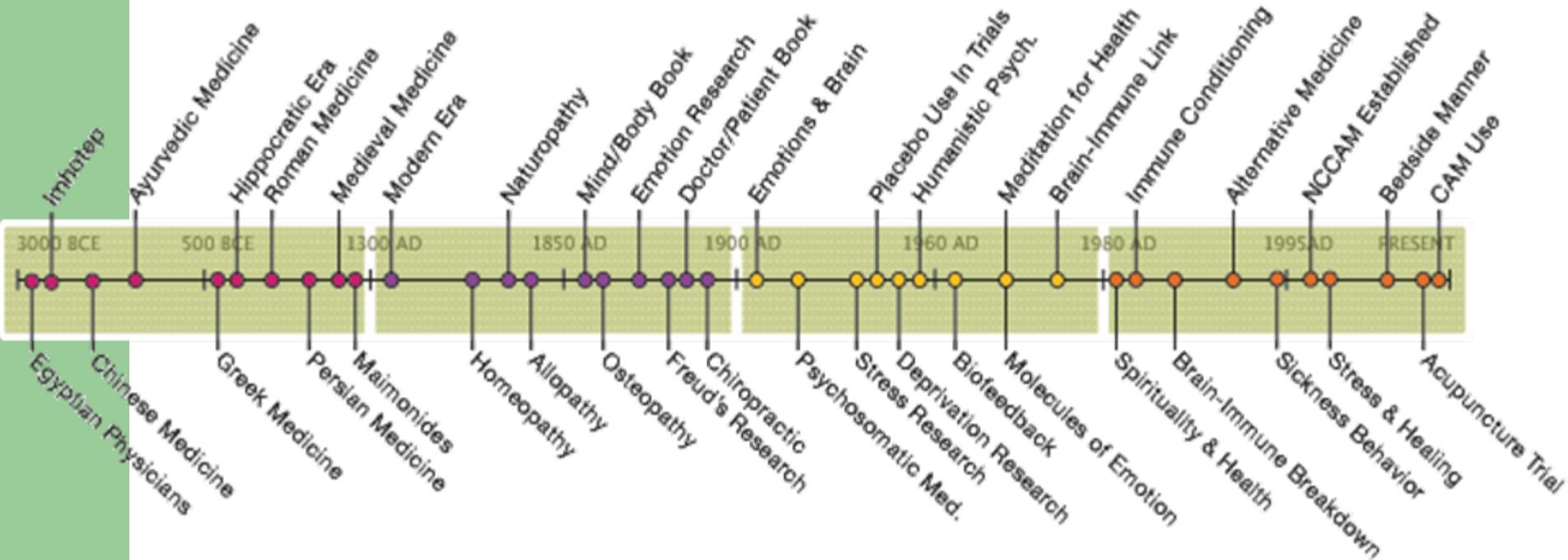
“Historically speaking, integrative medicine is a newcomer. The term itself is still foreign to many consumers. However, the idea of integrating the mind, body, and spirit into healthcare is practically as old as time itself. Plato may have said it best thousands of years ago: ‘*The great error of our day in the treatment of humans is that some physicians separate treatment of psyche from treatment of body.*’”

As the following timeline illustrates, “...integrative medicine is a natural outgrowth of many different healing systems, and it continues to blend cultures and ideas – both old and new.”

Timeline: integrative medicine*

*(see www.thenewmedicine.org)

3000 BCE to Present



New approaches in Institutions

- Courses, workshops and programs in medical and nursing schools are focused on a more holistic approach to healing and include discussion of the place of the spiritual in healthcare practice
- Textbooks: address issues of spirituality and mind/body/spirit connection; include spiritual assessments; growing respect for the place of 'spirituality' in the healing process
- Use of supervision and video-taping to assist students to attend to the whole person as they learn to care for patients - becoming the 'norm' as part of the medical school curriculum

Interviews: healthcare professionals

- What helps you cope with the stress related to your work with cancer patients?
- Do you regularly use any spiritual practices to maintain your well-being?
- Do you suggest to your patients the use of spiritual practices as part of their treatment plan?

References:

- Margaret A. Burkhardt and Mary Gail Nagai-Jacobson. *Spirituality: Living Our Connectedness*. NY: Thomson Delmar Learning, 2001.
- Mary Elizabeth O'Brien. *Spirituality in Nursing: Standing on Holy Ground*. Boston: MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Inc. 1999.
- Parker J. Palmer. *Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward An Undivided Life*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey –Bass, A Wiley Imprint, 2004.
- PBS Documentary. *The New Medicine*, March 2006, and The New Medicine website: www.thenewmedicine.org
- Christiana M. Puchalski, MD, OCDS, Rabbi Elliot Dorff, PhD, Imam Yahya Hendi, MA, “Spirituality, Religion and Healing in Palliative Care,” in Clinics in Geriatric Medicine 20 (2004) 689-714.
- Daniel P. Sulmasy, M.D. *A Balm for Gilead: Meditations on Spirituality and the Healing Arts*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2006.
- Gillian White. *Talking about Spirituality in Healthcare Practice: A Resource for the Multi-Professional Healthcare Team*. London and Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2006.