



LEADING SPIRITUAL CARE ORGANIZATIONS RELEASE FIRST EVIDENCE-BASED WHITE PAPER EXPLORING NURSES' ROLE IN PROVIDING SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

NEW YORK, N.Y. (March 13, 2017)—HealthCare Chaplaincy Network (HCCN) and its affiliate, the Spiritual Care Association (SCA) today released the first evidence-based white paper on the integration of spiritual care in nursing practice—“Spiritual Care and Nursing: A Nurse’s Contribution and Practice.”

The new white paper is designed to help guide the field, empowering nurses to better integrate basic levels of spiritual care into their practice, raise their comfort levels in addressing spiritual issues, and understand when to refer to professional chaplains to provide in-depth support. It is available online at www.healthcarechaplaincy.org/spiritualcare/nursing.

According to academic studies cited in the report, many nurses recognize their role in caring for their “patients in their entirety . . . [and] in this meeting, in this area with those who are vulnerable and in pain, nurses can and must find space to achieve the spiritual care.” Yet, “most nurses have had minimal training and education around providing spiritual care to their patients, and often have even less comfort attempting to do so.”

At the same time, while most patients and families do not anticipate in-depth spiritual support from their nurses, a high percentage of patients have expressed a desire for providers, including nurses, to ask about and potentially address spiritual and religious concerns.

“The white paper highlights that nursing has long been associated with spirituality and meaning making,” said Rev. Eric J. Hall, president and CEO of HCCN and SCA, and one of the contributors to the white paper. “It’s time to reinforce nurses’ valuable contribution to spiritual care and build on it, especially given today’s increasing recognition that whole-person and patient-engaged care relies, to varying extents, on the entire interdisciplinary team. This can powerfully influence optimal health care.”

With contributions by SCA’s nursing advisory board and chaplaincy leaders, the white paper lays out the roles of nurses as spiritual care generalists and professional chaplains as spiritual care specialists. It notes that providing proactive spiritual care has been proven to have a positive impact on clinical outcomes, patient satisfaction, and cost.

Among the questions explored are: What can a nurse do to address the spiritual needs of a patient or family member? How is spirituality the same or different from religion? When should a nurse refer a patient or family to a professional chaplain? Is it ever ok to pray with a patient, or to share the nurse’s own faith and religious resources?

Cristy DeGregory, Ph.D., RN, a gerontologist and clinical assistant professor at the College of Nursing, University of South Carolina, who contributed to the white paper, said it is “key” to understand the role of each member of the interprofessional team in the provision of spiritual care.

“We often think spiritual care is only necessary at the end of life or reduce it to the screening assessment done upon admission. But it is important to find ways of extending spiritual care and recognizing the potential importance for all patients,” she said. “This paper is a tool to help nurses more effectively contribute to providing better integrated spiritual care.”

In addition to this white paper, ongoing efforts by HCCN and SCA to educate nurses, as well as other disciplines, include a growing number of online courses, webinars, conferences and articles on various aspects of spiritual care. In October 2016, HCCN released a transformative white paper, “SPIRITUAL CARE: What It Means, Why It Matters in Health Care.”

About HealthCare Chaplaincy Network™

HealthCare Chaplaincy Network™, based in New York, is a global health care nonprofit organization that offers spiritual-related information and resources, and professional chaplaincy services in hospitals, other health care settings, and online. Its mission is to advance the integration of spiritual care in health care through clinical practice, research and education in order to increase patient satisfaction and help people faced with illness and grief find comfort and meaning—whoever they are, whatever they believe, wherever they are. For more information, visit www.healthcarechaplancy.org, call 212-644-1111, and connect with us on [twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

About Spiritual Care Association

The Spiritual Care Association is the first multidisciplinary, international professional membership organization for spiritual care providers that includes a comprehensive evidence-based model that defines, delivers, trains and tests for the provision of high-quality spiritual care. Membership is open to health care professionals, including chaplains, social workers, nurses and doctors; clergy and religious leaders; and organization. SCA, with offices in New York and Los Angeles, is a nonprofit affiliate of HealthCare Chaplaincy Network. For more information, visit www.spiritualcareassociation.org, call 212-644-1111, and connect with us on [twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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