



NEW SPIRITUAL CARE ASSOCIATION FORMED TO ADVANCE CHAPLAINCY PROFESSION AND PROVISION OF SPIRITUAL CARE BY OTHER DISCIPLINES
Meets Rising Demand for Spiritual Aspect of Whole-Person Care in Today's Health System

NEW YORK, N.Y. (April 12, 2016)—A new interdisciplinary professional organization focusing on spiritual care, the Spiritual Care Association (SCA), was announced last night. It has been established with the goals of providing robust education and career paths in spiritual care in health care, raising chaplaincy to a more standardized and visible profession, and, ultimately, helping more people in need of spiritual support.

“It’s time to make spiritual care a priority. This forward-looking model modernizes the profession and maximizes the potential of spiritual care in whole-person care,” said Rev. Eric J. Hall, SCA’s president and CEO.

One of SCA’s core components is a learning center featuring online courses. It provides continuing education for chaplains as well as other audiences interested in spiritual care, including clergy, doctors, nurses, and social workers. It also offers a ground-breaking and more convenient way to fulfill requirements in the academic study portion of clinical pastoral education (CPE) for chaplain interns.

In addition, the association presents a new credentialing and certification process for professional chaplains. The requirements are the first in the field to include objective, evidence-based knowledge and demonstrated clinical competence, such as that required in other health care disciplines. Professional health care chaplains provide comfort and meaning to people, regardless of religion or belief, during illness, end of life, grief, or other spiritual distress.

SCA also includes a vigorous advocacy platform to mobilize individuals and organizations at grassroots, national and international levels for the advancement of the spiritual care agenda, such as greater reimbursement for professional chaplaincy services.

SCA, based in New York and Los Angeles, Calif., is a nonprofit, international organization with membership open to chaplains and other health care professionals, clergy and organizations. It is an affiliate of HealthCare Chaplaincy Network (HCCN), a 55-year-old nonprofit organization that has been leading the field in clinical care, education and research related to spiritual care in health care.

Hall, who is also HCCN’s president and CEO, announced SCA during his address to more than 300 on-site attendees and thousands via webcast from around the globe at HCCN’s annual Caring for the Human Spirit Conference, currently underway in San Diego, Calif.

The new organization emerges amidst rising demand for spiritual care and a growing body of research demonstrating its positive impact on medical outcomes and patient experience. As well, there is increasing recognition that the delivery of spiritual care requires in addition to chaplains the participation of multiple disciplines as spiritual care generalists. Surveys also find a majority of clergy want to increase their knowledge, skills, and comfort level in tending to the seriously ill or dying.

“SCA is responding to decades-old cries to transform the chaplaincy profession,” said Hall. “This new association goes well beyond what existing organizations are doing in the field, by responding to the needs in today’s health system and filling gaps so we ensure that our profession is sustainable and growing, and our patients gain the comfort and meaning they deserve.”

To standardize and advance the field, SCA is built around a delivery system for education and testing that is based on the first evidence-based quality indicators and scope of practice, or set of competencies. Consensus panels of international experts convened by HCCN developed these tools, which were released earlier this year as a lead up to the formation of SCA.

The tools support the standardized knowledge base that underpins SCA’s educational programs as well as SCA’s requirements for becoming a Credentialed Chaplain or the higher level of Board Certified Chaplain. The credentialing and certification requirements for the first time align more closely with other disciplines. They include having a standardized patient exam—this one, with a focus on clinical competencies for chaplains.

Hall expects these developments to drive interest in becoming professional health care chaplains and better integrate them into interdisciplinary health care teams.

To learn more about SCA, and to join or register for its programs, visit www.spiritualcareassociation.org.

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