



SPIRITUAL CARE ASSOCIATION URGES CONSUMERS, HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO TELL CONGRESS ‘SPIRITUAL CARE MATTERS’

New York, N.Y. (March 27, 2017)—The Spiritual Care Association (SCA) and its affiliate, HealthCare Chaplaincy Network (HCCN) are spearheading a petition that calls on Congress “to recognize spiritual care as a key aspect of whole-person health care; and to support and facilitate expanded access to optimal spiritual care and resources across health care settings.”

The groups, both leading nonprofit organizations in the field of spiritual care, are urging consumers and health care professionals to sign the online petition to send a strong message to Congress that “spiritual care matters.” The petition is available at www.change.org/p/tell-congress-that-spiritual-care-matters

“It’s time to stand together to put spiritual care on the radar of policy makers,” said Rev. Eric J. Hall, president and CEO of SCA and HCCN. “When we talk about patient-centered care and whole-person care, we must include spiritual care. A unified call for action is critical to ensure that spiritual care becomes more mainstream, so that patients and their families receive optimal support in what is often their greatest time of need.”

The petition notes that a significant body of evidence supports the efficacy of spiritual care as a value-added service in health care, including a positive relationship between spirituality and health and well-being, as well as a correlation between spiritual support and patient satisfaction and lower cost of care.

It also points out that authoritative bodies emphasize the inclusion of spiritual care in health care. Most recently, the American Medical Association’s House of Delegates adopted a policy recognizing “the importance of individual patient spirituality and its impact on health and encourages patient access to spiritual care services.”

In addition, the petition cites patients and family members on the merits of spiritual support, including speaking with a professional chaplain: According to one individual quoted in the petition: “Without someone to talk with, my health problems seemed overwhelming, I am so glad I found you because talking with you has eased my burden.”

Separately, SCA and HCCN are encouraging consumers and health care professionals to contact their U.S. senators to influence legislation related to the inclusion of chaplains on interdisciplinary health care teams.

Specifically, in the last session of Congress, bipartisan leaders of the Senate Finance Committee introduced S. 3504, the Creating High-Quality Results and Outcomes Necessary to Improve Chronic (CHRONIC) Care Act of 2016; the legislation is likely to be reintroduced in the current Congress. Of interest is section 502, which requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study on the formulation of a comprehensive plan of longitudinal care for Medicare beneficiaries with serious or life-threatening illnesses, which includes an examination of interdisciplinary care teams that, as defined by the legislation, “may include a chaplain, minister, or other clergy ...”

“Given the importance of spiritual care to individuals facing chronic conditions and assessing end-of-life options, we urge the Senate sponsors to further refine the CHRONIC Care Act by changing the word ‘may’ to ‘shall.’ This would ensure that spiritual health will be considered as part of the GAO’s study,” said Hall. “Moreover, it would mark another step toward inclusion of spiritual care and enhanced overall health care.”

About the Spiritual Care Association

The Spiritual Care Association (SCA) is the first multidisciplinary, international professional membership association 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. SCA is a nonprofit affiliate of HealthCare Chaplaincy Network. Visit www.spiritualcareassociation.org, call 212-644-1111, follow on [Twitter](#) or connect on [Facebook](#).

About HealthCare Chaplaincy Network™

HealthCare Chaplaincy Network™ (HCCN), founded in 1961, is a global health care nonprofit organization that offers spiritual care-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 improve patient experience and satisfaction and to 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.healthcarechaplaincy.org, call 212-644-1111, follow on [Twitter](#) or connect on [Facebook](#).

Media contact: Carol Steinberg csteinberg@healthcarechaplaincy.org 212-644-1111, ext.121