

Vital to the Village:

Valiantly Voicing our Unique Contributions as Spiritual Care Providers

2009 Summit
Orlando, Florida

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Who Provides Spiritual Care? The question of who is responsible for spiritual care in the context of the interdisciplinary healthcare team is appropriate to ask when many disciplines now seek to contribute to spiritual care as a part of their mandate to offer “holistic care”. The best answer to the question, who provides Spiritual Care, is that every professional discipline is responsible. Then what makes Spiritual Care Professionals Unique?

Through video clips, presentation and discussion, participants in this workshop will be provided with a current language that articulates the uniqueness we bring as spiritual care providers to the health care team. Clearly identifying what we bring as spiritual care providers will nurture and sustain us, and enable us to rediscover and reclaim our centre, to be vital participants in our village.

Spiritual Care Professionals (SCP) are **specialists**. The specialized training includes conceptual, linguistic and experientially based training and expertise to communicate and work at depth with people in the realm of spirituality. SCPs draw on a basis of knowledge and experience grounded in work with patients, family and staff that includes sensitivity to both religious and spiritual needs. The SCP works to accurately diagnose the spiritual need of others while also seeking to stimulate and use for the benefit of the other person, spiritual resources arising from both within the person and from the relationship established with the SCP.

On the one hand, Spiritual Care Professionals provide spiritual care that relies on a long history that informs the profession. This is historically religiously based. SCPs automatically, and often unconsciously are designated into an **archetypical role**, which can enable or hinder the relationship created with the patient/family member or staff.

On the other hand, Spiritual Care Professionals address the needs of patients through the exercise of spiritual care. Primarily, the spiritual task is to create a **purposeful relationship**. The SCP purposefully and intentionally establishes a relational environment where patients freely offer themselves to reveal that which is fundamentally most important to them. Through a disciplined self-awareness, the Spiritual Care Professional establishes a relationship of trust and mutuality

that is solely for the benefit of the patient. Spiritual Care Professionals are intentional by establishing a purposeful relationship by allowing their whole person to be used for the purpose of serving the needs of the patient.

Spiritual Care is also transformative in nature. Because the patient is seeking to address a life-related meaning question in their lives, then both the Spiritual Care Professional and the patient/family member, staff become partners in the potential for **transformation**. Yet, transformation is not dependent solely on just the SCP and the patient. Rather, this co-creating moment which looks beyond themselves for an energy of life (some call this God) that can speak afresh to the context of life at that moment. Thus, the expectation is that a person's spirit is renewed, amidst sometimes difficult and very demanding life's circumstances, yielding a spiritual influence more powerful and significant than was ever anticipated.

To "be" with a patient in the role as a Spiritual Care Professional creates the experience based in a *purposeful relationship*, which has the potential to be *transformative*, one that actually, in the present moment, creates a new meaning amidst life's circumstances and is of immediate and lasting benefit. To experience the transformative moment is a normal part of the relationship that is co-created between the Spiritual Care Professional and the patient/family member/staff; yet it cannot be contrived or controlled; rather it erupts within the experience. As the SCP (chaplain) intentionally joins with the person by living into the moment, the content becomes less important and the co-creating of a new energy for life supersedes their best common objective or imagination. It is in the context of the person's life where new faith or new potential is discovered, that hope yields renewal, where the work of that which is beyond us all – the work of the spirit of life respects what is but also creates novelty and new resources to pull us toward wholeness in order to meet the demands of living or dying.

This workshop, **Vital to the Village: Valiantly Voicing our Unique Contributions as Spiritual Care Providers**, seeks to promote a new language and appreciation for a time-honored profession – pastoral care. The purpose is to update our language and affirm the unique value of the contribution we offer as a part of the interdisciplinary team. It is incumbent on Spiritual Care Professionals (Chaplains), to provide the needed language to communicate the spiritual perspectives and needs of the patient with all those involved with the spiritual enterprise.