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SPIRITUAL CARE COLLABORATIVE

Workshop Title: “Research Methods and Theory Building in Pastoral Care”

Workshop Description: The future and well-being of chaplaincy as a profession depends on chaplains being able to understand and conduct research. Our hands-on workshop focuses on how quantitative methods can be used to substantiate the work of chaplains and how qualitative methods can be used to explore concepts within chaplaincy that are difficult to quantify. The seminar will also examine the challenges the profession faces in defining and measuring the impact of chaplaincy on patients, families and staff.

Presenters: Jackson Kytle, Ph.D., the Rev. George Handzo B.C.C., and Kathleen Galek, Ph.D., HealthCare Chaplaincy, New York City

Introduction: Purposes and organization of the workshop. Why should chaplains care about research?

- Improve quality of service to patients, families and staff
- Improve the range and quality of both theory and published research
- Reality of modern health care and the inevitable focus on outcomes chaplaincy and movement toward protocols in chaplaincy...Best to be at the table when this work is being done

Learning Outcomes: Participants will:

- Develop a working knowledge of research design and analysis in the field of pastoral care
- Understand the strengths and limitations of qualitative and quantitative methods
- Appreciate the challenges the profession faces in defining and measuring the impact of chaplaincy care on patients, families and staff

Logic (and illogic) of Research:

- Brief history of physical and social sciences and the rise of empiricism in social research
- Science as a “system of organized skepticism” that worries most about adopting false positives
- Danger of accepting, too easily, one’s pet hypothesis
- Problem of “dustbowl empiricism” (Mills)
- Different meaning of “theory” in religious education and the social sciences
- Special challenge to both theory and method of evaluating the effectiveness of pastoral interventions
- Outcomes Oriented Chaplaincy

Theory First—Importance of Building and Testing New Theory in Pastoral Care:

- Use new theory to advance the profession of pastoral care
- Searching for new theory is more important than choice of method—problem of escape into method
- Limits of armchair theory building—moving theory from chair to bench to bedside
- Defining variables to be measured

Richness of Qualitative Methods—Good Way to Get Going

- Useful when the phenomenon is not well understood and theory is not refined
- Difficult, time consuming and expensive to do well
- Various types of qualitative methods

Power of Quantitative Methods—Working with Many Variables and Causal Paths

- Humans are pattern-seeking, meaning-making beings who will confound many well-intentioned efforts to study their attitudes and behavior
- Power of expectancy in human affairs and social research...double blind experiments and powerful placebo effects in research and practice
- Prospective, experimental design with random assignment and a control group as the “Gold Standard” for establishing causation
 - Best when theory and measures are refined
- Quasi-experimental design and use of surveys:
 - Correlation versus causation in empirical research
 - Problem of generalizing from observed differences in a sample to those of the entire population when we have poor returns from mailed or online surveys
- Contribution of mixed method studies using both qualitative and quantitative elements

Primer on Descriptive Statistics

- Data collection
- Frequency distributions; mean, mode and median
- Scatter plots, variance, and regression analysis

From Bench to Journal—Preparing a Theory or Research Paper for Dissemination

Applications

1. Research problem for breakout groups: Evaluating the outcomes of a pastoral visit.

Concluding Remarks

Resources: An excellent applied research methods text for chaplains is: Denise F. Polit, Cheryl Tatano Beck, Bernadette P. Hungler. Essentials of Nursing Research: Methods, Appraisal, and Utilization (Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 5th edition, 2001). ISBN: 0781746264. 5th Edition.

Glossary of Research Terms: (handout available at the workshop)

- Language of concept, construct, model and theory
- Criteria for evaluating good theory
- Conceptual and operational definitions
- Independent and dependent variables
- Multivariate research and causal paths
- Attitude scales used in pastoral research
- Validity and reliability
- Threats to validity
- Experimental design
- Correlation and causation
- Inferring differences in a population from observed differences in a sample
- Descriptive and inferential statistics
- Ethical issues in research with human subjects such as respondent burden and informed consent