

New Medicine, New Biology:

Spiritual Wellness, Spiritual Assessment and Spiritual Care

by Chaplain Paul R. Johnson M. Div.

How would you define these terms; **“Spiritual Wellness”, “Spirituality”, “Spiritual Assessment”, “Spiritual Care”**? One’s answer depends completely on their perspective and definition of the divine. I attended a workshop led by Dr Wayne Dyer. He began by asking a profound question. “Which are you?” he asked, “A human being that is trying to be spiritual or a spiritual being having a human experience?”

When you think about it, these represent two very different postures of life. In a recent article by Dr Simon Yu, *Metaphysics and Medicine: Metamorphosis of Modern Medicine into Pseudo-Religion* he reflects upon an essay written by Dr. Larry Malerba, DO from New York.

“According to Dr. Malerba, in a condensed version, modern medicine projects the image of scientific rigor but has all the hallmarks of a system of religious belief. The practical consequence of its insular perspective is the dead-end system of Western medical materialism that we have today. Repair of the physical body is erroneously equated with healing.

In its quest for objectivity, medicine has rejected its spiritual roots and lost sight of its humanity. It arrogantly rejects the wisdom of thousands of years of human history, is fragmented to the point of dissociation, devoid of common sense, preoccupied with short-term material goals, a slave to its financial overlords, and utterly lacking in the requisite spiritual knowledge that would enable it to find its way out of its self-imposed foolishness.”

Spiritual knowledge is often left out or treated minimally in the holistic model of patient care. As a Chaplain of many years, to me that exclusion is absolutely inexcusable! Medical care has its origin deep in the model that we are indeed spiritual beings! I have seen first hand the power and significance of providing spiritual care to all people of all faith traditions. A major problem is the lack of knowledge and understanding of those providing medical care as to what spiritual care really is.

Dr Yu goes on to say:

“By contrast, most forms of holistic health and healing, on the other hand, begin with the fundamental assumption that we are spiritual beings temporarily inhabiting physical bodies during our time here on the physical plane. If this truth is to be honored, spiritual laws and energetic principles must be taken into account when we consider issues of health and illness.”

With all that being said, I think the first step for any medical care provider or patient is to have a working knowledge of what “Spirituality” is in the human experience. Many people assume that spirituality is about religion and specific

religious practices therefore they think they would be intruding to impose any inquiry. Religion is a factor but there many more aspects to the spiritual essence of the human experience, all of which are vital to spiritual wellness.

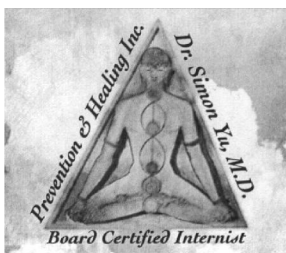
A simple definition of our spirituality is that it is the part of us in search for that which provides purpose, meaning and hope to life. As part of a health provider's initial medical assessment, there should also be an assessment of the patient's spirituality; their strengths, their weaknesses and their needs. Unfortunately many practitioners and patients don't know how to do that so it is left out of the plan of care. Many patients are unaware of the importance of their spirituality in maintaining spiritual wellness and overall physical and mental health.

So, what is spiritual wellness? Simply stated, it is the synergistic balance of body, mind and spirit working together in harmony to rid the being of anything that is toxic to the physical body, the consciousness and the ultimate purpose and meaning of life. ***Being whole!***

Spiritual care is the ultimate "*Empathic Connection*" with the person. It is being there to see how the patient sees. To feel what the patient feels. To help them find strength and discipline within their beliefs and life experiences. It's helping them to find their purpose, meaning and hope while facing major health issues.

My hope is that you would take the steps to understand the definition of spirituality and to make spiritual wellness a major component of your holistic approach to medical care. It is my hope that you will take steps to develop a spiritual assessment tool in your initial patient assessment and managing their plan of care. It is my hope that you will acquire the skills and knowledge to provide empathic spiritual care.

I can provide the skills and training for the care giver or the individual patient to make sure Spiritual Wellness is at the forefront of the patient's plan of care. Remember, you are a spiritual being having a human experience. Your spiritual power is a must for your overall health!



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