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Encountering the Soul: Engaging Patients' Religious/Spiritual Beliefs

Spring 2019

<u>Course Dates:</u>	January 8, 14*, 22, 29, February 5, 19 Tuesdays, 5:30-7:30 PM *One Monday date
<u>Maximum Students:</u>	20
<u>Class Year:</u>	MS1 and MS2 and School of Nursing
<u>Course Leads:</u>	Scott Maurer, MD Krissy Moehling, PhD, MPH
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Description:

Religion and spirituality (R/S) are important components of well-being and clinical care for a majority of U.S. patients, but many clinical students and providers lack the skills to connect with patients and families regarding the influence of religion and spirituality on patients' health and health care decisions. This elective will approach R/S and health from an attitude of humility to allow respectful exploration of patients' R/S beliefs and traditions, and skills to support patients with R/S needs.

This mini-elective is designed for medical and nursing students of any religious or spiritual background, including those who identify as non-religious, atheist, or agnostic. Students and faculty will explore the influence of R/S on patients' health care decisions and practice interviewing skills that will allow for conversations with patients on religious/spiritual aspects of their lives. The intention of this mini-elective is not to make students experts in R/S traditions; rather, it proposes to equip students with a set of tools necessary to provide care that is sensitive to their patients' religious and spiritual beliefs.

The mini-elective may help students address questions such as: How do I address R/S in the clinical encounter in a way that is authentic, compassionate and culturally sensitive? What is the impact of incorporating R/S informed care on key measures that drive clinical care such as quality of life, patient satisfaction, and medical cost utilization? How do I approach a patient with a religious or moral belief that is different than my own? Can I become a better provider by providing R/S informed care to my patients?

Students who participate in this mini-elective will enjoy learning from live patient informants, didactic sessions, open forum discussions, and practicing skills in mock clinical scenarios (with little work outside of the classroom).

Objectives:

1. By the end of this elective educational experience, students will obtain the knowledge to:
 - Summarize existing data regarding R/S in the healthcare setting.
 - Identify the extensive religious and spiritual resources for patients who are hospitalized.
 - Describe cultural competency and situational awareness, as it pertains to patients' religious or spiritual needs.

2. During this elective educational experience, each student will participate in role plays of mock clinical scenarios and will demonstrate the skills necessary to obtain a spiritual history and provide appropriate patient counseling/referrals.
3. Throughout this elective educational experience, students will learn from patient informants to better understand R/S informed care as an important and effective aspect of holistic healthcare.

Requirements:

- Students are expected to attend all sessions but may still receive a certificate of completion for attending 4/6 sessions.
- Engage in mock clinical scenarios.
- Come prepared having read required readings for relevant sessions.
- Be willing to engage in class discussions.
- Complete an anonymous pre- and post- course survey to help guide further curriculum development.

Pre-Requisites:

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: This mini-elective would not have been possible without the initiative, dedication and excellence of Andrew Abboud and Laura McNamara who, while MS2 students, realized the need to engage this topic in the medical field. Their work to understand and incorporate this component as part of compassionate care, led to an initial 2-hour workshop on R/S informed care in May 2017 underwritten by the 2016-2017 Year of Diversity Provost Grant, and the creation of this mini-elective course.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Session One - Opening the conversation: Acknowledging the role that religion and spirituality has in the clinical encounter

Date/Time: January 8, 2019 5:30-7:30pm

Location: TBD

Instructors: Krissy Moehling, PhD, MPH, Scott Mauer, MD, Lisa Podgurski, MD

Description: This session will provide an overview of the role that religion and spirituality (R/S) have in the lives of patients, how R/S influences their health, quality of life and clinical decision making, and the desire that many patients have in wanting their R/S needs addressed by clinical care teams. How does one engage R/S in conversation, either by initiating it or by responding to a request made by a patient? Is this even appropriate to do? What is the role of the provider in R/S care? What if your value system differs from your patient: is it authentic to address R/S when there are seemingly disparate views? This session seeks to address these questions and normalize conversation about R/S through didactics, open forum discussion, and the opportunity to practice taking an R/S assessment. Practice will emphasize using empathic communication skills (guided by the NURSE model) within a framework for addressing R/S concerns as part of compassionate care.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Summarize existing data regarding the health effects of R/S and the preferences of patients to address R/S.
2. Explore how R/S can be engaged in an authentic manner between provider and patient.
3. Utilize a three-question spiritual assessment tool.

Student Preparation: None.

Session Two – Know thy self: The cultural framework of religion and spirituality in health

Date/Time: **Monday, January 14, 2019 5:30-7:30pm**

Location: **Offsite** – Bellefield Presbyterian Church. 4001 5th Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15213 (across from the UPitt bookstore).

Instructors: Jeannette South-Paul, MD and Abdesalam Souidi, PhD

Description: Our ability to engage and respond to others is filtered through our own cultural lens. Cultural competency begins then with the exploration of our own biases. This session will explore the cultural framework of R/S and its impact on health and decision making through narrative, in-class exercises and discussion.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Develop a deeper appreciation for how cultural interpretations of religion/spirituality guide health and decision making.
2. Discuss how one's own biases can influence this narrative and filter into professional advice.
3. Acquire skills to guide a culturally competent framework for discussion of religion and spirituality.

Student Preparation

Readings:

1. VanderWeele TJ, Balboni TA, Koh HK. Health and spirituality. *JAMA*, 2017; 318(6): 519-520. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28750127> or <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2646460>
2. Saguil A and Phelps K. The spiritual assessment. *Am Fam Physician*, 2012; 86(6): 546-550. <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2012/0915/p546.html>
3. NPR. **When Beliefs Fail Us, How Do We Move Forward?** *Part 3 of the TED Radio Hour episode Failure Is An Option.* <http://www.npr.org/2016/07/29/487611743/when-beliefs-fail-us-how-do-we-move-forward>
4. Editor's Choice. Healthcare for the many. *BMJ*, 2017; 357: j3122.

Other: Culture Box

Please bring an object/personal item or several objects that you feel help describe you as a person, with a particular focus on your own religion or belief system if you have one.

Session Three – What is religion, what is spirituality, and how do they shape clinical decision making?

Date/Time: January 22, 2019 5:30-7:30pm

Location: TBD

Instructors: Daniel Hall, MD, MDiv, MHSc and Frank Lieberman, MD

Description: Now that we have proposed to you the importance of R/S in the clinical encounter, what exactly is the difference between religion and spirituality? How do different people conceptualize and experience religion? How is this different from spirituality? These are just a few of the many questions we will attempt to answer as we take a deeper look into religious/spiritual traditions, the ways in which they impact humans, and how the healthcare field attempts to measure this impact.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Robustly discuss the similarities and differences between religion and spirituality.
2. Conceptualize intrinsic vs. extrinsic religiosity.
3. Develop a framework to understand how a patient's religiosity may affect their health and healthcare decision making.

Student Preparation: None.

Session Four – End of life care: a framework for a discussion of religion, morality, and ethics

Date/Time: January 29, 2019 5:30-7:30pm

Location: TBD

Instructors: Lisa Podgurski, MD, Scott Maurer, MD, Frank Lieberman, MD

Patient Informants: A panel consisting of four patients and family members from various faith traditions (including agnosticism or atheism) and intensity of beliefs (60 minutes)

Description: People frequently turn toward religion or spirituality in times of serious illness. In this session, we will explore how various religious traditions and personal beliefs affect care at the end of life. The session will open with a twenty-minute didactic discussing religious/spiritual issues and sources of distress in end of life care. Students will then have an opportunity to ask questions of a four-person panel. The panel will be followed by a forty-minute debriefing session where students will explore common themes, surprising responses, and personal reactions.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Value the impact of different religious traditions and intensities of belief on end-of-life care.
2. Recognize common religious uncertainties at the end of life including the hope for a miracle, perspectives on artificial hydration and nutrition, and views on withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment.
3. Discuss how to apply previously learned skills when addressing a patient with religious distress at the end of life.

Student Preparation: None.

Session Five - Religion and spirituality in everyday health and the primary care encounter

Date/Time: February 5, 2019 5:30-7:30pm

Location: TBD

Instructors: Donald B. Middleton, MD and Andrew Nowalk, MD

Patient Informant: TBD (patient who knows Dr. Middleton or Dr. Nowalk, speaks to how R/S shapes personal health narrative, 30 minutes)

Mock role plays: Role play taking a spiritual assessment using a mix of case scenarios and impromptus. Use the framework of addressing R/S in dialogue as part of compassionate care via the NURSE model (Name, Understand, Respect, Support, Explore). Cases to consider include caring for refugee/migrant populations, counseling on contraception/abortion, and standard health maintenance visits.

Description: Although attention to R/S informed care is most commonly thought of in end-of-life scenarios, patients' R/S beliefs are also important cultural determinants of health in the primary care setting. In this session, students will consider the many, and often inconspicuous, examples of how R/S affects the shared decision-making of a patient and provider in the primary care setting. Students will continue to apply skills learned throughout the mini-elective in mock clinical encounters via role plays.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Appreciate the role of R/S informed care in the primary care setting.
2. Identify practical scenarios in which it may be appropriate to inquire about a patient's R/S.
3. Apply skills of spiritual history-taking in mock clinical patient encounters.

Student Preparation: None.

Session Six - Meet the Chaplains: Knowing when and how to refer your patients to pastoral care services

Date/Time: February 19, 2019 5:30-7:30pm

Location: TBD

Instructors: Rev. Richard Freeman, Sr. and Rabbi Jonathan Pearlman

Description: As a provider, you are not expected to become an expert on providing R/S informed care, especially when it comes to counseling patients on spiritual or theological doctrine or addressing religious/spiritual needs/distress. Thankfully, our hospitals are staffed with pastoral care teams to help address our patients' specific R/S needs and concerns. In this session, students will learn from chaplains about the important roles pastoral care teams play in providing interdisciplinary R/S informed care and about their role as members of interdisciplinary healthcare teams.

Following this discussion, students will participate in a debriefing session with the course directors to reflect on and discuss the lessons they have learned over the last six sessions.

Objectives: Students will be able to:

1. Identify the extensive religious and spiritual resources for patients who are hospitalized.
2. Participate in both written and group reflection exercises.
3. Have an enhanced awareness that attending to the R/S needs of patients is a standard practice and a cornerstone of compassion medicine.
4. Have a heightened awareness of personal barriers to attending to a patient's R/S wishes.

Student Preparation: Students will come prepared to reflect on their experiences throughout the mini-elective. Students will be asked to participate in a group debriefing discussion and anonymous course survey.