

Spiritual Health Care Week: October 16-22, 2017

Celebrating the Launch of the Spiritual Health Education Project

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Hear ye, hear ye! October 16-22 has been proclaimed as **Spiritual Health Care Week** in British Columbia! (<http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/proclamations/proclamations/SpiritHlthCrWk2017>) During this week we recognize “Spiritual Health Professionals and the role of spiritual health care principles in BC’s health system.” Spiritual Health Professionals are trained at the graduate level and have significant clinical residency training requirements in order to practice. As patients and families experience health challenges, crises, losses and difficult health news, Spiritual Health Professionals provide assessment and support for the emotional and spiritual needs which often accompany the physical needs of the body.

Spiritual Health

supporting person-centred care

Many studies over the past 50 years show that there are benefits to health and well-being when spiritual needs are addressed, including:

- Improved motivation to complete the tasks of healing
- Increased ability to cope with pain, nausea and discomfort
- Greater use of palliative care at end of life
- Lowered blood pressure
- Decreased feelings of anxiety, depression, loneliness and anger
- Decreased alcohol and drug use
- Decreased use of invasive technology and life-prolonging treatment at end of life
- Shorter hospital stays¹

Earlier this month the BC Ministry of Health, in collaboration with all BC Health Authorities and the [Canadian Association for Spiritual Care](#), released **Spiritual Health – Supporting Person-Centred Care**, educational resources for health care staff and leaders, as well as patients and families, to improve knowledge of spiritual health principles and the role of the Spiritual Health Professionals within our health authorities. These resources include a selection of posters, brochures, and an e-learning module that is available for the public to view at spiritualhealth.viha.ca.

¹ BC Ministry of Health, *Spiritual Health, Supporting Person Centred Care* project communication, Sept. 20, 2017



These educational resources are the first of their kind in Canada and are already receiving interest from other provinces. The CNO Council of BC has endorsed **Spiritual Health – Supporting Person-Centred Care** and approved it to be rolled out in British Columbia's health authorities "to enhance the way spiritual health is supported for people who are receiving care in our health care system by fostering an organizational culture that recognizes the spiritual dimensions of health and incorporates patients' core values and beliefs into their care"².

The World Health Organization recognizes the importance of caring for the human spirit in the hospital setting, and the value of elements such as faith, hope and compassion in the healing process.³ In 2012, the BC Ministry of Health echoed this recognition and approved a [provincial framework](#) stating the value of Spiritual Health Professionals. Evidence indicates that spiritual health care interventions have been proven to increase client satisfaction,⁴ reduce spiritual distress,⁵ increase patient's sense of peace,⁶ facilitate meaning-making for clients and family members,⁷ and increase spiritual well-being,⁸ all of which contribute to a positive hospital experience.

Spiritual Health Care has a long history in BC hospitals and residential care homes. "The B.C. Ministry of Health is committed to improving knowledge of spiritual health principles and the role of the Spiritual Health Professionals within our health authorities as the next decades unfold. This is central to the provincial priority of creating a more patient-centred healthcare system and all health care staff are an essential part of this initiative as we provide care for individuals that encompasses not only physical health, but all dimensions of a person – the spiritual, the physical, the social, and the emotional."⁹

² BC Ministry of Health, *Spiritual Health, Supporting Person Centred Care* (2017)

³ World Health Organization, 1998.

⁴ Marin DB, Sarma V, Sosunov E, Egorova N, Goldstein R, Handzo G. 2015. The Relationship between chaplain visits and patient satisfaction. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*. 21 (1):14-24.

⁵ Snowden A., Telfer I, Kelly E, Bunniss S, Mowat H. (2013) "I was able to talk about what was on my minds." The operationalization of person centered care. *The Scottish Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*. 16 (Special), 16-22.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Flannelly, L.J., Handzo, G.F., Weaver, A.J., & Smith, W.J. (2005b). A national survey of health care administrator's views on the importance of various chaplain roles. *Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 59 (1-2), 87-96.

⁸ Rabow M, Knish S. (2014) Spiritual well-being among outpatients with cancer receiving concurrent oncologic and palliative care. *Support Care Cancer*. DOI 10. 1007/s00520-014-2428-4.

⁹ BC Ministry of Health, *Spiritual Health, Supporting Person Centred Care* (2017)