

Addressing Spirituality and Religion in Health Care: Comparing Provider and Patient Perspectives

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Project Summary

Spirituality and religion play an important role in health and the experience of illness for many individuals. According to the Gallup Polls in 2016, 75% of Americans consider religion as fairly important or very important in their life, while 89% of Americans say they believe in a God. Multiple studies have indicated that a large portion of patients wish to discuss their spiritual concerns with healthcare providers, but these issues are often not addressed. On the other hand, physicians have reported feeling uncomfortable or unprepared for addressing these issues with patients or even feel that these discussions may not be appropriate for the clinical encounter. However, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations has required that the spiritual assessment be incorporated in healthcare. Additionally, a 2011 study of over 3,000 inpatients at the University of Chicago supported that focusing on a patient's spiritual concerns increases overall satisfaction with their care.

My IMPACT project is to develop and implement a survey of both health care providers and patients to assess attitudes towards spirituality in health care and how patients' spiritual needs are currently being addressed by physicians at Michigan Medicine. I have reviewed the current literature, and used my research to develop two surveys, one for healthcare providers and another for patients. We are now working to finalize the current survey before distribution. The patient cohort will come from over 800 patients that serve as e-advisors for the Patient and Family Centered Care program. Faculty from Michigan Medicine will be surveyed via email listserves."

Action Items/Outcome

- Gather survey data from large cohorts of physicians and patients
- Analysis and reflection on the data to provide new knowledge of provider, patient, and trainee attitudes toward spirituality and religion and current practices of addressing patient spirituality
- Dissemination of results and analysis

Conclusion/Reflection

Overall, this project is an important step towards improving the quality of patient care and increasing patient satisfaction with their health care. We hope to use the survey results to identify gaps in current practice and in the training of physicians related to addressing patients' spiritual needs. Based on previously published studies of physicians and patients, I am aware of the opportunities that likely also exist here at Michigan to improve how patients receive health care and realize how awareness of patients' needs within this realm can improve my own practice as a future physician.