

## *Editorial*

### **SPIRITUAL ASSESSMENT: A NURSING RESPONSIBILITY**

Linda Dunn, DSN, RN, CNL  
Editorial Board Member

On my way to work this morning, I noticed a church marquee that had this message posted: “Procrastinators suffer from hardening of the oughteries” (author unknown). I immediately thought about this editorial...nurses must not procrastinate – meeting the spiritual needs of patients will reduce patient suffering (Grant, 2004). Not having been taught spiritual assessment in one’s nursing program of studies is not an excuse. We have a mandate, as well as a professional responsibility – procrastinate no more!

In the last issue of *OJRHHC*, we focused on the personal responsibility of each nurse in assessing one’s own spirituality as well as evaluating how nursing is addressing spirituality in clinical practice or academia. Remember that Joint Commission requires that nurses provide a spiritual assessment of every patient (JCAHO, 2004); however, patient’s are reporting that their spiritual needs are not being adequately addressed by healthcare providers (Grant, 2004; Ross, 2006). This might be a concurrent problem within nursing curriculums and the healthcare environment. Nursing students must be taught how to conduct a spiritual screening/assessment and how to provide spiritual interventions into the patient’s plan of care. Likewise, the healthcare environment must continue to promote the systematic provision of spiritual care of patients (Cavendish, et al., 2004).

One strategy I have used is to investigate where spirituality is addressed within the nursing curriculum at the institution where I teach as well as to investigate how/when nurses assess a patient’s spiritually in the clinical area where I practice. Within the clinical practice arena, I was saddened to learn that spiritual assessment is most often done with two questions: “Do you have a religious preference?” and “Do you need to see a chaplain?” While this is done primarily only on admission, we need to remember that spiritual assessment/care is a continuous process much like physical assessment.

Recently, I conducted a review of the literature on spiritual assessment and learned that it may be conducted in multiple ways with numerous tools. There are **MANY** resources available...for example, go to [www.professionalchaplains.org](http://www.professionalchaplains.org) then at the bottom left, click on “New Spiritual History Tool”. A page will come up “Pastoral Care – Standard of Practice” – underneath here you will find several helpful resources for both you and your agency. Another site is [www.spiritualcompetency.com/recovery/lesson7.html](http://www.spiritualcompetency.com/recovery/lesson7.html) This publication provides a spiritual assessment interview and two instruments: FICA and HOPE. Perhaps these materials could provide opportunities for staff development on your clinical unit or within your nursing curriculum.

So, stop procrastinating!! Let’s not be guilty of the “oughteries”

## REFERENCES

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