

*Editorial***CREATING HEALING ENVIRONMENTS: A CHALLENGE FOR NURSING**

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In my very first editorial, I issued a personal challenge to all readers to find time each day to nourish one's spirit. In another editorial, I asked nurses to use the FICA tool for both personal assessment of one's spiritual history as well as that of patients. In this editorial, I again want to challenge nurses to be diligent in providing spiritual care to all patients as well as to oneself. After all, nurses are perhaps the ones who spend more time with patients than any other member of the healthcare team. If indeed nurses are instruments of healing, then we must be spiritually well ourselves before we can be positively present with the patient. The human spirit is what sustains a person and what enables one to cope when stressed or challenged by daily life (Puchaski & McShimming, 2006).

As you well know, America's healthcare system is in crisis. Many agencies are working short staffed; many healthcare providers are impelled to increase the number of patients seen daily; patients feel the impact with shorter physician visits or less attention by nurses, social workers, and other healthcare providers. While healthcare providers may experience burn out, patients are feeling alienated (Puchalski & McSkimming, 2006).

So how will nurses protect themselves from burn out and at the same time provide patients with the spiritual care they deserve? I believe what we need is *healing environments*. This concept has weighed heavily on my mind in recent weeks. In conducting a database search, I could only find one article that actually addressed this term. Puchalski & McSkimming (2006) reported on a study they conducted with two organizations for the purpose of identifying a solution to the depersonalization of healthcare. As a result of this study, they created the healing environment intervention to reintegrate spiritual awareness into the role of each health care provider. On a smaller scale, I began to think about how nurses could create healing environments for themselves and their colleagues. Stop for a moment and think about where you work. If it is a hospital-type setting, there is probably a chapel as well as chaplain support. These services are for staff as well as patients. Think about the unit on which you work: staff restrooms, break rooms, and yes, even the space around the time clock, are great places to post poems or positive thoughts for the day that could encourage each other. Look around for bulletin boards or sites to place a bulletin board. Post "gotcha's" of staff who were "caught" doing good deeds for others without being asked, for those who went out of their way to assist a patient or family member, or positive comments that patients may send in a thank you note or a hospital evaluation of care. Look around the perimeter of your work place...do you have an area to create a meditation garden? This could be a great project that could be on a continuum from

simple to elaborate. Items might include a water fountain or birdbath, a garden bench, flowers/shrubs, or a birdfeeder. If we can provide outside smoking areas, seems to me that we could provide a place to meditate and reflect about the stresses of the day and “regroup” before going home. Then at home, find your own area to have quiet time, such as a corner of your favorite room. Other opportunities include forming support groups, card ministries, book clubs, prayer groups, yoga classes, exercise groups ... even a jail ministry can be meaningful!! The list of possibilities is endless. Be creative, be an encourager, help stomp out burn out by creating healing environments. Refreshed spirits are better prepared to provide spiritual care regardless of the setting. Then share the referenced article with your agency administration for strategies to create healing environments...patient satisfaction will definitely be enhanced and staff turn-over might be reduced!

### REFERENCES

Puchalski, C.M., & McSkimming, S. (2006). Creating healing environments. *Health Progress*, 87(3), 30-35. [[MEDLINE](#)]