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Spirituality in Practice

Spirituality is a delicate topic, and some may not be open to talking about their beliefs. Spirituality is generally understood to be an essential aspect of being human. Assessing the spiritual needs of patients is a key component in the nursing process. A compassionate and thoughtful nurse can make a patient feel more secure, making it easier for him to express his spirituality. The participation of both patient and health care provider is vital in promoting spiritual health. The focus of a spiritual assessment is to gather information regarding the patient's spiritual needs in order incorporate them into the plan of care, to treat the patients as a whole. In this essay, I shall summarize the patient findings based on a spiritual assessment tool, describe significant discoveries about the person interviewed, analyze the interview, point out barriers and challenges, and describe my personal spiritual experience and the importance of this tool to better meet the needs of my patients. Assessment Findings

Mr. Ferrell is a 56-year-old man; he is married and has a son and a daughter. He is retired due to medical issues but tries to stay active at home. Patient has both diabetes and hypertension, which are the cause of his renal failure. Mr. Ferrell said, "Faith is what keeps me going". Religion plays an important role in this family, but it grew with the onset of his disease. He usually wakes up thanking God for another day of life and prays every night before going to sleep; as a Catholic he tries to go to church on a regular basis, which is every Sunday. When things seem to be difficult, he turns to his faith and spiritual beliefs as a coping mechanism. The

patient mentioned that he and his family are very involved with church and their community to thank God for all He does for them. Discoveries

Faith is what guides his life, followed by family. God and the support of his family give him the strength and hope to stay strong in difficult times. Patient strongly believes that faith plays an important part in his health, but he knows that he could also do much more for himself to improve his health. Mr. Ferrell quotes, "I can't expect God to help me if I don't help myself". Praying and honoring God does fulfill his spiritual needs, but it does not magically improve his health. He mentioned that his weakness is food and as a result he struggles with his diabetic and renal diets; eating healthier could improve the patient's health. Mr. Ferrell believes and knows that he needs to treat his body better as God has been so merciful with him and considers his eating habits a sin. As a retired man, he finds time to do many Church activities that benefit both the community and himself. He likes doing community services as it helps release some stress caused by his illness. Being involved in Church has taken him to Jerusalem, which to him was the most wonderful experience. Traveling has played an important role for him but cannot do so often due to his dependency of a machine to clean his blood. What went well?

The patient was able to express himself openly; no questions were skipped or left blank. Explaining the reason and the importance of performing this spiritual assessment helped build rapport and trust with the patient easily. Also, getting some insight into his spiritual needs made the connection between nurse and patient stronger. What would you do differently in the future?

Performing a spiritual assessment can be difficult, as one may have the tendency to judge or have an opinion about things. When performing questionnaire or assessments, it is important to listen without judging or questioning patient, as it may cause the patient to feel uncomfortable. Performing a spiritual assessment in a very private area would also improve the ability to develop rapport and gather information, since this topic is very delicate and personal.

Barriers/challenges

The interview went remarkably well, and I was able to create rapport and trust very quickly; the only impediment was having the patient's wife present at the time of the assessment. The wife stayed per patient's request, but it seemed that the patient was not openly answering my questions unless the wife approved the questions and responses. It seemed to me that the wife was very influential in the patient's answers and would interrupt too much and too often. This was both a barrier and a challenge, as it caused some frustration on my end. It is very important to be able to come in into a room and ask the patient's family--in a kind way--to step out of the room for a few minutes. Family can influence a patient's answers and/or may inhibit the patient to answer as openly as they would if they were alone.

Learning/improvement

One can learn so much from others, but it's a matter of being willing and open to new ideas. With this type of assessment, I was able to get an insight regarding the patient's religion, along with his culture, values, and beliefs. Additionally, it helped recognize the appropriate spiritual intervention for the treatment of this patient. The entire process of preparing and assessing a person's spirituality provided me with a more open mind towards other people's beliefs, religions, values, and ideas.

I realize it is important to know and recognize that religion plays a vital role in the life of every individual and making it part of the patient's plan of care can only lead to the improvement of patient's outcomes. Spirituality is a foundation of strength, guidance, and assurance. Many may even say that spirituality helps in making choices. Though spiritual care may require openly talking about spirituality, caring for someone's spiritual needs requires an understanding of them. Ultimately, the objective of a spiritual assessment is to get the patient to share this feature of their health.

