

SPIRITUAL NEEDS, RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND NURSING

REVIEW BY KIM S. MOORE

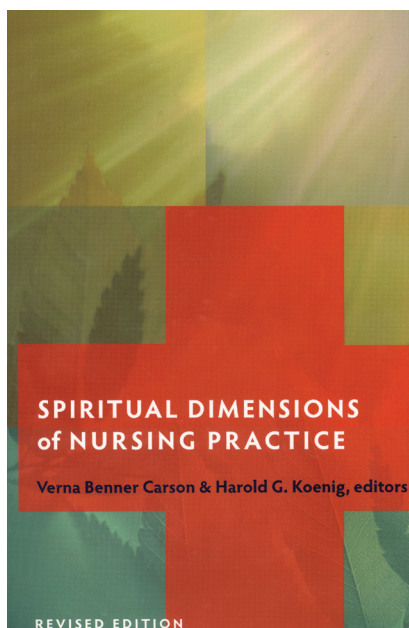
For nurses and other health care providers, Verna Carson's and Harold Koenig's text will provide useful and timely information on the role of spirituality in health care. The book's 13 contributing authors identify ways in which meeting patients' spiritual needs is both a form of caring and a way to provide meaning in practice. The editors used a variety of contributors within and outside of nursing, representing a broad range of religious and spiritual experiences. Many of us chose a health care profession in order to provide care and comfort to others, and this book helps the reader address a very important aspect: spiritual care.

The first of four parts introduces the reader to spirituality and its relationship to the nursing profession. The authors identify ways spirituality and religion differ from each other and review current research related to spirituality.

Part II examines the relationship between spirituality, religion and health care and provides helpful information on various world religions. Having such a framework of knowledge allows nurses and other health care providers to meet the spiritual needs of patients with greater sensitivity and understanding. Such information also helps the reader better understand religious practices, from dietary preferences to death-related practices, and would be of benefit to professionals in a variety of other care settings.

Part III examines how nurses and health care professionals identify and respond to spiritual needs of patients and families from childhood through bereavement.

Part IV takes spirituality beyond the individual and addresses spiritual care in communities and work environments, providing a framework for ethi-



**SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF
NURSING PRACTICE**

EDITED BY VERNA BENNER CARSON AND
HAROLD G. KOENIG

TEMPLETON PRESS, 2008 (revised edition)
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cal decision-making. Each chapter concludes with questions for review and personal reflection.

From the perspective of a chief nurse in an acute-care hospital, I found the text to be useful for bedside or clinical nurses as well as other clinical caregivers and health care leaders. Tools, tables and principles throughout provide a quick spiritual care resource. Case studies demonstrate application to a wide variety of clinical settings and keep the reader's interest.

The reflections at the end of each chapter could be incorporated into staff meetings and related to internal case

studies. In addition to its application for clinical practice, the text also gives a wealth of references to validate the evidence-based approach to spiritual care and gives readers ideas for conducting nursing research in their own facilities.

While the entire text provides important information, the chapters in Part III are especially helpful in the way they provide tools to identify and address spiritual needs of patients in different age groups and with different physical and mental conditions. They also offer guidance through death and bereavement. Health care workers who assist patients and their families with end-of-life planning will see practical recommendations from a variety of experts in the field. I found information on strategies for helping grieving people and their families useful both as a caregiver and, having recently lost my father to cancer, as a family member. Talking about emotional and spiritual goals may become the most important conversation we have with patients and families as we help them plan end-of-life care, and parts of the books sparked memories of conversations in my own family.

The chapter on making ethical decisions is especially relevant to those involved with an ethics committee; it could be used as an overview and overall orientation for new committee members. By highlighting precedent-setting cases, the authors give readers an understanding of the historical perspective of ethics committees and a framework for ethical decision-making.

The final chapter directs attention to meeting the spiritual needs of the nurse, emphasizing the importance of employees integrating their religious beliefs and spiritual values with the workplace setting. The authors propose

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