



***Effects of Pain on the Whole Person:  
“I’m more than this illness!”***

Ohio Pain Initiative

Audio Conference

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Doug Cluxton, MA, LPC

VP, Education

Ohio Hospice & Palliative Care Organization

# Objectives

1. Discuss the importance of assessing pain from a holistic perspective
2. Describe at least four interventions to address the psychosocial or spiritual aspects of pain



**“The sick person is at a point where what he wants most from people is not love, but an appreciative grasp of his situation.”**

- Joy Williams in *State of Grace*

**“I would like a physician who  
... can treat body and soul.**

**To get to my body, my doctor has to get to my character. He has to go through my soul. .... I'd like my doctor to scan *me*, to grope for my spirit as well as my prostate. Without such recognition, I am nothing but my illness.”**

- Anatole Broyard  
in *Intoxicated by My Illness*

# Physical Assessment

- Words to describe pain: deep, throbbing, sharp, etc.
- Intensity
- Location
- Duration
- Aggravating / Alleviating Factors

# Total Pain

- Factors influencing perception of pain
  - Physical
    - Adverse effects of treatment
    - Chronic fatigue
  - Psychological
    - Anger at diagnosis
    - Feelings of helplessness
  - Social
    - Worry about family and \$\$
    - Loss of role
  - Spiritual
    - What's the meaning of this?
    - Can I be forgiven?

(Adapted from R. Twycross)

# Mind/Body Relationship

- Relaxation Response – Herbert Benson
  - Rewarding behaviors led to physical changes
  - Metabolism, breathing rate, heart rate decreased following meditation
- Relaxation Response
  - Can be elicited by prayer, diaphragmatic breathing, relaxation, etc.



Victor Frankl, author of *Man's Search for Meaning*, described humans as “meaning-makers.”

- Meaning is often being addressed when one is asking “Why?”
- The “human quest”

# Perceptions of Pain

- Cultural & Religious Issues
  - Tariq, a 36 y.o Muslim, dying of cancer
  - Ann, a 78 y.o. Roman Catholic, metastatic breast cancer
  - Howard, an 85 y.o. WWII veteran, stoic

# Suffering and Pain

- Suffering experienced as
  - a disconnect
  - an assault on the integrity of the person
  - a feeling of fragmentation
  - an expression of the soul
- Pain experienced as
  - physical discomfort
  - sense experiences – throbbing, burning, stabbing, etc.
  - quantify



# Spiritual Pain

How do we humans give  
expression to our spiritual pain?

# Religion & Spirituality

- Religion:
  - Organized beliefs, doctrines and practices that express one's spirituality
  - Examples: prayer, rituals & other devotional acts (sacred readings)
  - System of thought to organize a life view
  - Beliefs that explain suffering or death

# Religion & Spirituality

- Spirituality:
  - An integrating and creative energy - Haase
  - Life-force springing from within that pervades our entire being – Amenta
  - Capacity for transcending...to give meaning, to cope - Hay

# Language of the Spirit

- Sources of hope
- Issues of meaning – “Why?”
- “Unfinished business” - (Elisabeth Kubler-Ross)
- Expressions of gratitude
- Fears & worries
- Core values
- Sources of strength

# Language of the Spirit

- Forgiveness, regret, guilt
- Love & relatedness
- Creativity
- Issues of grief & loss
- Spiritual activities, e.g. meditation, prayer, the arts
- Dreams & visions
- Relation to God, the Divine, Holy, transcendent

# Alterations of Self Image

- Who am I in the face of this suffering?
- What remains of ME when I have lost capacities and can no longer DO the things I used to do?
- What is my purpose?



It is important to remember.....

“that a broken patient remains a whole person  
and that healing transcends survival.”

- Betty Ferrell, as quoted in Journal of Clinical Oncology,  
Vol. 25, No 5 (Feb. 10)2007

# FICA Spiritual Assessment Tool

- developed by Christina Puchalski, MD

- F = F Faith or beliefs
- I = I Importance or I Influence
- C = C Community
- A = A Address

# FICA

- F = Faith or beliefs
  - “Do you consider yourself to be a spiritual or religious person?”
  - “What do you believe in that gives meaning to your life?”

# FICA

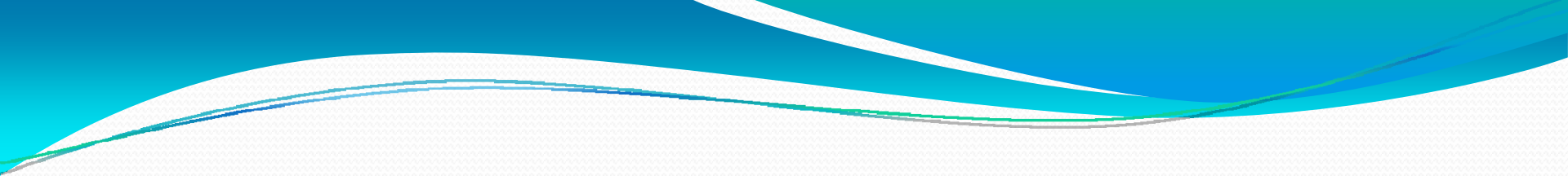
- I = Importance or Influence
  - “What role do your beliefs play in how you deal with your illness?”
  - “Do you find that those beliefs are important to you now?”

# FICA

- C = Community
  - “Are you part of a religious or spiritual community?”
  - “Is this group a support to you?”

# FICA

- A = Address
  - “How would you like us (members of the healthcare team) to address these issues?”



*“I’ve always looked to the Bible for stories to guide my life. But no one in the Bible lived like this!”*

- Eighty-two year-old woman living with heart and lung failure

# HOPE's Progression

- During Dx. & Tx.      ● “I hope I’ll be cured.”
- Failure of Tx.      ● “I hope I won’t have pain.”
- Entering Hospice      ● “I hope I won’t go back to the hospital.”
- During Hospice      ● “I hope my grandkids visit.”
- Actively Dying      ● “I hope the sun shines tomorrow.”

May I Walk You Home? By Hutchinson & Rupp

# Assessing Hoping Styles

Does the person have:

1. A realistic grasp of the illness and prognosis?
2. An ability to envision alternatives and substitute goals?
3. A realistic attitude about possible negative outcomes?

# Assessing Hoping Styles

4. An ability to tap into personal & external resources?
5. Mutually supportive and meaningful relationships?
6. A determination to find new meaning in life?
7. Trust in a Higher Being and/or ability to have a transcendent perspective?

# Ways to Support People Coping with Spiritual & Emotional Pain

- First, listen & affirm that you hear them
  - Body language
  - Uninterrupted attention
- Avoid advice or judgment
- Explore his/her spiritual resources



# Questions to Explore the Soul

- “What is the most challenging part of this illness?”
- “What is helping you cope?”
- “How is this affecting your quality of life?”
- What religious or spiritual activities help you? (prayer, meditation, relaxation, etc.)



# Questions to Explore the Soul

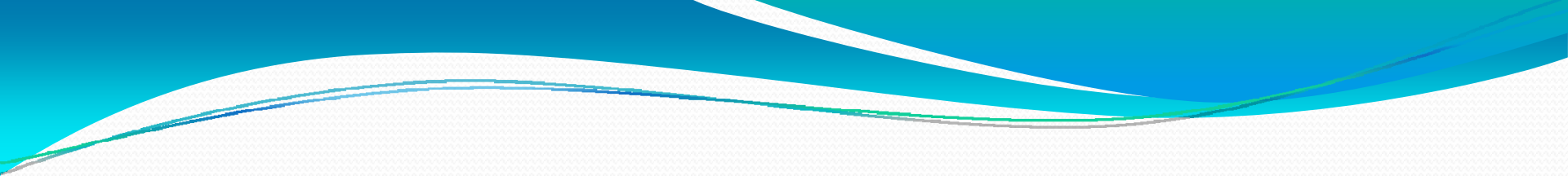
- What do you find yourself thinking about at this time?”
- “What concerns you the most at this time?”
- Who is helping you with these issues?”
- Are there certain beliefs or practices that are sustaining you?”

# Spiritual Resources

- Prayer
- Framing (“existential framing”)
- Meditation
- Relaxation
- Guided imagery
- Creative arts
  - Music, writing, drawing, painting, etc.

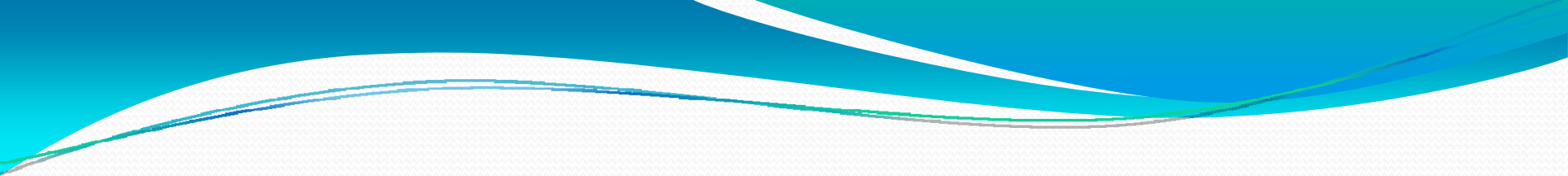
# In Summary

- To address emotional & spiritual aspects of pain:
  1. Maintain a whole person perspective
  2. Listen for psychosocial/spiritual expressions of pain
  3. Ask patients how we (healthcare team) can support them
  4. Assess for spiritual issues
  5. Support patient's hope
  6. Encourage development of spiritual resources for effective coping



**“It may well NOT  
be what we do,  
but rather how we are  
that matters most.”**

Ira Byock, MD (2001). Spirituality & Medicine CONNECTION. 4(4):1



Ohio Pain Initiative  
555 Metro Place North  
Suite 650  
Dublin, OH 43017  
1-800-776-9513

[www.ohiopaininitiative.org](http://www.ohiopaininitiative.org)