

Spiritual Guidelines

- 1) Not all patients, or significant other, will be able to share their troubling thoughts
- 2) Assessing the needs of the terminally ill is possible only after first establishing a trusting relationship
- 3) Spiritual assessment can be thought of as evaluation of relational well-being
- 4) Engaging in "life review" is a non-threatening way to begin assessing belief systems and unresolved issues
- 5) A patient's "future stories" will be helpful for assessing hope and anxiety
- 6) Assessment should discover inner resources for dealing with dying
- 7) Staff need to be alert to spiritual pain even if it is not verbalized
- 8) Diverse belief systems, and even more diverse individual interpretations will exist, even within a family unit, sometimes results in intense conflicts
- 9) Spiritual assessments and psychosocial assessments complement each other and can easily be combined
- 10) Evaluation may change as illness progresses; when faced with impending death, some will find themselves returning to earlier beliefs and values

Spiritual Care Responses

- 1) Many dying patients and significant others derive great comfort from the presence of supportative clergy
- 2) Some will perceive the dying process as a period of growth and a time of gaining spiritual strength
- 3) Offering presence at the time of death can bring spiritual comfort to dying patients and those close to them; anything said or done during this time needs to be compatible with the beliefs and values of the dying person.
- 4) Care providers should never impose their beliefs on another individual
- 5) There is not always a solution the care provider can offer; view the interaction as facilitating the person's coping skills just as one would with psychosocial problems
- 6) Spiritual care can be an emotional drain
- 7) Appropriate joy and humor brings a lift to the spirit
- 8) There are patients and/or significant other who will wish to be left alone, physically and spiritually
- 9) Impatience to "get it over with" or "get to the other side" are usually a sign of acceptance
- 10) Grief follow-up with the significant other needs to be made available.