

## SPIRITUAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

As a palliative care doctor I often wonder how effective I am at assessing and addressing a patient's spiritual & existential concerns as they confront advancing illness and impending death. How do we 'non-pastoral care' professionals raise these issues? Are there right & wrong ways of saying things to patients about these sensitive matters? Does the fact that I am a 'non-religious' person influence if and how I approach such things with a patient?

A recent article by two senior nurses from the USA addressed these issues as part of a paper on 'Refractory Cancer Pain in a Nursing Home Resident'\*. They gave useful hints on addressing & supporting a patient's "spiritual domain of care" through taking a "spiritual history".

Questions in a spiritual history include inquiring about:

- the patient's belief system
- participation in spiritual practices
- the meaning of these practices
- how spiritual beliefs impact medical decision-making in illness and end-of-life care.

Two useful mnemonics were offered to assist with remembering questions to pose.

### 1. FICA

**F** = **faith** (does the patient practice a faith or spirituality that gives life meaning?)

**I** = **importance** (is faith or spirituality an important part of his/her life?)

**C** = **community** (is the patient involved in a faith or spiritual community?)

**A** = **address** (how can clinicians assist with incorporating faith or spirituality in the patient's overall management?)

### 2. HOPE

**H** = **hope** (what is the source of hope, meaning & strength for the patient?)

**O** = **organised** religion (is the patient involved in an organized religion and how is this helpful or not helpful?)

**P** = **personal** practices (what types of reflection or prayer are beneficial to the patient? If such practices are not relevant then consider discussing personal beliefs)

**E** = **effects** (what beliefs or principles of faith or spirituality may impact on the patient's medical care?)

Clearly there is overlap between these two mnemonics but I think they help us to remember important things to raise.

The authors remind us that it is vital to understand that "spirituality is not always associated with religion". They also make valuable comments about the role of nurses, in particular, in addressing existential concerns and maintaining a patient's dignity. Worth a read I think.

*Dr Greg Mewett*  
*Palliative Care Physician*  
*GRPCT*

\* Ref: Carpenter JG, Berry PH. Journal of Hospice and Palliative Nursing. Nov 2012;14(8):516-521



## GRAMPIANS REGIONAL PALLIATIVE CARE

CONFERENCE - 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2013

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**FEATURING:** Bronwyn Roberts, Dr Angus McLachlan, Associate Professor Jane Turner, Dr Wendy Penney, Associate Professor Charlie Corke, Dr Sonia Fullerton, Professor David Kissane, Ms Odette Waanders, Deborah Wardle.

### BRONWYN ROBERTS



For over a decade Bron Roberts has been sharing simple, effective and clinically proven strategies for improving health and wellbeing, increasing productivity, creating meaningful relationships and finding the fun with groups around Australia and in the USA.

In workshops that combine the latest research in positive psychology, emotional intelligence and human emotion / behaviour with an atmosphere of fun and laughter that engages, educates and entertains Bron takes her audiences on an action packed ride designed to assist individuals and organisations re-connect with the important things in life.

Beginning her happiness journey over 30 years ago as a stress management consultant and meditation teacher in the post trauma rehabilitation setting Bron was introduced to the power of laughter by her clients. While her early focus was on the benefits of laughter as they relate to positive health, well-being and healing she quickly discovered that our ability to 'find the fun' also has a positive and proven effect on productivity, creativity, performance, leadership and innovation.

Bron is currently completing her second year of the 'Humor Academy' through the University of Portland (Oregon), – a serious adventure into the clinical side of humour and laughter as they effect health, well-being, learning and engagement, and is in her final year of under-graduate degree in Psychology.

Bron received a 2012 Kraft Australia 'Toast of a Nation Award' for her work in promoting the benefits of laughter around Australia and is delighted to be able to say that she is officially 'a happy little Vegemite'.

Bron's website can be found at [www.letslaugh.com.au](http://www.letslaugh.com.au)

### CONTACTS

#### Grampians Regional Palliative Care Team

Ph 5320 3553	Fax 5320 6493
Dr David Brumley	davidb@bhs.org.au
Dr Greg Mewett	gregm@bhs.org.au
Dr Eve Westland	evew@bhs.org.au
Jade Odgers	jadeo@bhs.org.au
Regina Kendall	reginak@bhs.org.au
Lawrence Habegger	lawrenceh@bhs.org.au
Bernadette Matthews	bernadette@bhs.org.au

#### Ballarat Hospice Care Inc

Ph 5333 1118	Fax 5333 1119
Carita Potts	eo@ballarathospice.com

#### Central Grampians Palliative Care

Ph 5352 9328	Fax 5352 9425
Jane Bourman	jane.bourman@eghs.net.au

#### Djerriwarrh Palliative Care

Ph 5367 2000	Fax 5367 9641
Pam Ryan	pamr@djhs.org.au
Jane Cape	janec@djhs.org.au

#### Gandarra Palliative Care Unit

Ph 5320 3895	Fax 5320 3763
Dr David Brumley	davidb@bhs.org.au
Dr Greg Mewett	gregm@bhs.org.au
Maree Kewish	mareek@bhs.org.au

#### Wimmera Hospice Care

Ph 5381 9363	Fax 5381 9170
Melanie Hahne	mhahne@whcg.org.au
Jennifer Noonan	jnoonan@whcg.org.au
	hospice@whcg.org.au

#### Grampians Region Palliative Care Consortium

Peter Marshall	gpalcareconsort@gmail.com
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MARCH/APRIL 2013



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