

European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health

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Editorial

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

In this newsletter Dr. Piotr Krakowiak from the University of Torun, Poland, describes how the relationship between the sphere of religion and the medical system in Poland has developed in the time after communism and how scholars from abroad did help. We thank the author for his interesting and inspiring contribution!

Piotr Krakowiak will also be one of the keynote speakers at the 4th European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health in Malta, taking place May 22-24, 2014 (see www.ecrsh.eu). The conference website is updated and registration is possible now. Take also note of the Pre-conference Research Workshop with Prof. Harold Koenig and experts from Europe. Places are limited!

Further announcements of recent events can be found at the end of the newsletter. Please let us know about your conferences, projects and publications on the topic. Just send an e-mail to info@rish.ch.

*Stefan Rademacher, PhD
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Topic

From Religious Assistance to Spiritual Care for Patients in Poland

Piotr Krakowiak

During the communist era in Poland, religious assistance in health and social care was formally reduced to visits in extremis for the dying. Strict rules were ignored and priests would visit institutions, but without formal recognition. Since 1980, Solidarity has made religious and spiritual assistance one of the most important issues for the improvement of the health care system and chaplains have finally been employed

in hospitals again after many years¹. Sacramental assistance has dominated pastoral care, as Catholics make up around 90% of the population in Poland. There was no formal training for chaplains, and pastoral care in health care settings was marginally present in pastoral care training in Polish seminaries. In 1981, the first hospice team from Cracow started to build a hospice house, using Saint Christopher's Hospice in London as a model. Hospice home care began in Gdansk in 1983, initiated by a hospital chaplain and a team of volunteers. This model has proven to be successful and over 70 similar services have started in other cities, based totally on voluntary work. Most hospice chaplains have sought further education, doing post-graduate training in spirituality and psychology. Hospice chaplaincy became a matter of choice, while other chaplaincy jobs were not always desired by the clergy².

Since 1989, official documents have stated that adequately prepared chaplains should be employed in health and social care institutions. Vague descriptions of this service and a lack of standards for chaplaincy have resulted in the employment of local parish priests as part-time chaplains. Only hospice-palliative care units have created a training system for their chaplains, and have included spiritual care in teamwork. Larger hospitals were able to employ full-time chaplains and some of them have created pastoral teams. Most of the health and social care institutions in Poland still offer only sacramental assistance by Catholic priests, and Protestant or Orthodox clergy, where their communities are located. Ten years after democratic changes, in 1999, first attempts have been made to increase religious and sacramental care, adding the spiritual dimension and responding to the changing needs of patients. Among the recent lecturers at international workshops for chaplains, there were lecturers from the Vatican, as well as chaplains from the USA, Italy and Germany. The Polish Minister of Health was present and her support for this initiative gave hope for further changes in religious-spiritual care. Health care reforms

and the lack of financial resources have stopped this initiative for years. The only area of postgraduate training has been created in hospice-palliative care, both for adults' and childrens' teams³.

Since 2009, a group of people has started preparation for a postgraduate school of chaplaincy, where both ordained and lay persons, men and women could prepare for new spiritual care in health and social care institutions in Poland. Before launching the project, international conferences were held with the support of the Pontifical Council of Health Care Workers from the Vatican, to introduce new ways of spiritual and religious care methodologies. The first edition of postgraduate training for future chaplains and pastoral assistants in Poland was launched in 2011. Its first students consisted of ordained priests, religious men and women and lay persons - mostly women⁴. The first group of 40 students completed their studies at the "St. John of God School" in 2013, but there is no culture of teamwork in spiritual care yet, especially with lay persons. A long tradition of ordained priests being chaplains seems to prevail over preparation for professional spiritual care. Together with further training for ordained and lay persons willing to continue spiritual care in health and social settings, more research regarding spiritual care is needed in Poland.

In 2012, the joint initiatives of the Vatican Pontifical Council and universities from Germany and Poland resulted in an international conference in Warsaw. One of the outcomes was the launch of joint research regarding religious and spiritual needs of patients towards end-of-life in Germany and Poland. A project has been prepared by Prof. Arndt Bussing from Germany and was based on the SpREUK Questionnaire. In 2012, an international conference regarding spirituality in health care was launched in Gdansk, and first findings of Polish-German research were presented there by K. Franczak. In 2013, the nationwide conference for physicians was held in Warsaw, with more than 4'000 participants. Keynote speaker for this

event was the top international expert for spirituality in health care, Prof. Christina Puchalski. An American scientist with Polish roots, she gave part of her lecture in Polish and promised to assist with the development of spiritual care issues. Her lectures and presentation of the FICA Spiritual Assessment Tool have raised interest among physicians⁵. Apart from many theological books written from a Catholic perspective, there is little literature and research regarding spiritual care in a broader prospective in Poland⁶. A set of publications following a line of investigation and a textbook regarding spirituality in health care are due to be published in the Polish language under the direction of Prof. Puchalski, with the participation of various experts. Online resources will include basic information regarding spiritual care theory and research available to health and social professionals and volunteers.

Bibliography

¹ J. Jachimczak: *Słudzy życia*, [The servants of life], Kraków 2010.

² A. Muszala, J. Binnebesel, P. Krakowiak, M. Krobicki (Ed.): *Dolentium Hominum. Duchowni i świeccy wobec ludzkiego cierpienia*, [Dolentium Hominum. The clergy and laity towards human suffering], Kraków 2011.

³ P. Krakowiak, A. Janowicz (Ed.): *Dzieje pallotyńskiego hospicjum w Gdansk 1983-2013*, [History of Pallottine Hospice in Gdansk 1983-2013], Gdansk 2013.

⁴ www.bonifratrzy.pl.

⁵ *Opieka duchowa nad pacjentem - zbędny luksus czy niezbędny element leczenia*, [Spiritual care of the patient - unnecessary luxury or an essential part of treatment], www.mp.pl/kurier/83572.

⁶ P. Socha (Ed.): *Duchowy rozwój człowieka. Fazy życia - osobowości - wiara - religijność*, [The spiritual development of man. The phases of life - personality - faith - religion], Kraków, 2000.

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Announcements

Publications

Spiritualität in der Medizin - Luxus oder Notwendigkeit?



(German language)
A publication of the Klinik SGM Langenthal and the Research Institute of Spirituality and Health RISH (Switzerland). If you are interested please write to: info@rish.ch

A website focusing on integrating Spirituality into Clinical Practice Conveners made available some power point presentations given at a workshop from summer of 2013: www.emergingtoolsforinnovativeproviders.com/presentations

Included are PDF's of presentations by Ken Pargament and numerous other experts in the fields of religion and health, psychoneuroimmunology, and neuroscience.

Elements of Culture and Mental Health: Critical Questions for Clinicians

Edited by Kamaldeep Bhui
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/usefulresources/publications/books/rcpp/9781908020499.aspx

Meetings & Conferences:

2013

"Spirituality in End of Life Care – Responding with Creativity"

LOROS Annual Spirituality Conference, Oct. 31 - Nov. 1, Highgate House, Northampton (UK)

www.loros.com

"Einführung in die Achtsamkeitsbasierte Kognitive Therapie zur Rückfallprophylaxe bei depressiven Erkrankungen"

Nov. 7-9, Oberberg-Akademie, Berlin (Germany)

www.oberberg-akademie.de/programm.html

Annual Interdisciplinary Conference on Health, Religion & Spirituality

Nov. 7-9, Center for the Study of Health, Religion and Spirituality, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, IN (USA)

www.unboundedpossibilities.org/cshrs,
christine.kennedy@indstate.com

"Spiritual Care - Modewort, Trend oder echte Notwendigkeit"

Gemeinsame Herbsttagung von AGEAS und VKAS, Nov. 9-10, Quarten SG (Switzerland)

www.ageas.ch or www.medcath.ch

Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies

Dec. 2-4, Oxford (UK)

www.oxfordsymposiumonreligiousstudies.com

2014

3rd Annual Conference on Medicine and Religion

March 7-9, Chicago, IL (USA)

www.MedicineandReligion.com

"Spirituality in the 21st Century"

March 18-20, Prague (Czech Republic)

www.inter-disciplinary.net/critical-issues/ethos/spirituality-in-the-21st-century

"Spirituality in a Challenging World"

3rd International Conference of the British Association for the Study of Spirituality,

May 19-21, Ashridge House, Hertfordshire, UK, www.ashridge.org.uk

"Integrating Religion and Spirituality into Clinical Practice: Focus on Health Care Professionals"

4th European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health ECRSH14

May 22-24, University of Malta (Malta)

www.ecrsh.eu and the

Pre-Conference Research Workshop with Prof. Harold G. Keonig

May 18-21, University of Malta (Malta)

info@rish.ch

Faith-Based Nursing Conference

June 16-19, Marion, IN (USA)

www.indwes.edu/Nursing-Innovations

Impressum

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