WESTBERG INSTITUTE for NURSING
a division of the Spiritual Care Association

Spiritual Care Nursing: An Overview

Westberg Institute for Nursing | Spiritual Care Association

What Is Spiritual Care Nursing?

Spiritual Care Nursing is an emerging nursing specialty that builds upon nursing's longstanding commitment to whole-person, patient-centered care. It strengthens the registered nurse's preparation to recognize, assess, and respond to the spiritual dimension of health through advanced education, clinical judgment, evidence-based nursing interventions, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Spiritual Care Nursing recognizes that spiritual well-being may influence how individuals experience illness, suffering, hope, meaning, relationships, and healing.

Why Is Spiritual Care Nursing Emerging?

Although spirituality is recognized as an important dimension of whole-person nursing care, nurses may have limited preparation, time, or organizational support to address spiritual needs consistently.

Spiritual Care Nursing provides a structured approach to strengthening this aspect of professional nursing practice through:

- **Advanced education:** Developing specialized knowledge and clinical competencies in spiritual nursing care.
- **Nursing spiritual assessment:** Identifying spiritual strengths, concerns, and needs within the nursing process.
- **Evidence-based interventions:** Supporting hope, meaning, dignity, connectedness, and spiritual well-being.
- **Interdisciplinary collaboration:** Working in partnership with professional chaplains and other healthcare professionals.

How Does Spiritual Care Nursing Differ from General Nursing Practice?

All registered nurses have responsibilities related to whole-person care, including the spiritual dimension. Spiritual Care Nursing builds upon this foundation through additional education and competency development.

Specially prepared Spiritual Care Nurses can conduct more comprehensive nursing spiritual assessments, develop individualized Spiritual Nursing Plans of Care, implement appropriate nursing interventions, document and evaluate outcomes, and facilitate referrals when additional expertise is needed.

Spiritual Care Nursing strengthens nursing's contribution to spiritual care; it does not replace professional chaplaincy. Nursing and chaplaincy provide distinct and complementary contributions to interdisciplinary spiritual care.

Where Can Spiritual Care Nursing Be Practiced?

Spiritual Care Nursing may be integrated into a variety of clinical healthcare settings, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, long-term care, rehabilitation, hospice, palliative care, and other settings where nurses provide whole-person care.

The Westberg Institute recognizes that **the setting of practice matters**. Building upon Dr. Granger Westberg's original vision of wholistic health, Spiritual Care Nursing extends specialized nursing attention to the spiritual dimension into clinical healthcare environments, complementing the established practice of Faith Community Nursing within faith communities.

How Is the Westberg Institute Advancing Spiritual Care Nursing?

The Westberg Institute for Nursing, a division of the Spiritual Care Association, is supporting the development of Spiritual Care Nursing through:

- Specialized nursing education and competency development, including the Spiritual Care Nursing Certificate Program.
- Professional certification pathways, including the Certified Spiritual Care Nurse (CSCN) credential.
- Development of nursing spiritual assessment and practice resources.
- Research, scholarly publications, and evidence-based practice.
- Collaboration with nursing organizations, healthcare systems, educators, and professional chaplaincy.

Our Goal

> The goal of this initiative is to advance Spiritual Care Nursing as a recognized nursing specialty within healthcare systems.

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