Spiritual Care Nursing: Frequently Asked Questions

Westberg Institute for Nursing | Spiritual Care Association

1. What is Spiritual Care Nursing?

Spiritual Care Nursing is an emerging nursing specialty that integrates the spiritual dimension of health into clinical nursing care through advanced education and competency development. Nurses prepared in this specialty are Spiritual Care Nurses (SCNs).

2. How is Spiritual Care Nursing different from Faith Community Nursing?

Both specialties are grounded in Dr. Granger Westberg's philosophy of wholistic health but differ in their primary settings and approaches. Faith Community Nursing is practiced primarily within faith communities, integrating faith and health within the context of a particular community's beliefs and traditions. Spiritual Care Nursing is designed for clinical healthcare environments, including hospitals, outpatient facilities, and long-term care settings. It emphasizes **pluralism, humanism, phenomenology, and an ethics of care**, providing spiritual nursing care that respects patients of all religious traditions and nonreligious worldviews.

3. How is Spiritual Care Nursing different from the spiritual care all nurses provide?

All nurses have a responsibility to recognize and respond to spiritual needs within their professional competencies. SCNs receive additional education to conduct comprehensive nursing assessments of the spiritual dimension, provide specialized nursing interventions, develop care plans, and evaluate spiritual nursing outcomes.

4. Does Spiritual Care Nursing replace professional chaplaincy?

No. Spiritual Care Nursing strengthens and complements professional chaplaincy. SCNs provide specialized spiritual nursing care within the nursing process, while professional chaplains provide specialized spiritual care and counseling, including complex spiritual concerns, religious support, and rituals. Both professions collaborate through consultation, referrals, and interdisciplinary care planning.

5. What education is available for nurses interested in Spiritual Care Nursing?

The Spiritual Care Nursing Certificate Program includes four modules:

1. Philosophy of Spiritual Care Nursing
2. Whole-Person Nursing Assessment — Spiritual Dimension of Care
3. Evidence-Based Spiritual Nursing Interventions
4. The System — Implementation

The program includes coursework and an examination. Nurses who successfully complete both earn the **Certificate of Curriculum Competence**, which prepares them to integrate advanced spiritual nursing knowledge and competencies into clinical practice.

6. Is professional certification available?

The professional certification pathway leads to the **Certified Spiritual Care Nurse (CSCN)** credential, awarded by the Spiritual Care Association. Nurses seeking the credential must meet its eligibility requirements. The Certificate of Curriculum Competence is one of the eligibility requirements for the CSCN credential.

7. Can registered nurses take the Spiritual Care Nursing course without pursuing certification?

Yes. Registered nurses may complete the Spiritual Care Nursing Certificate Program and earn the Certificate of Curriculum Competence for professional development without pursuing the CSCN credential.

8. Can Spiritual Care Nursing be implemented in healthcare organizations without employed chaplains?

Yes. The Spiritual Care Nursing implementation framework includes pathways for organizations with and without employed chaplaincy services. Where chaplains are available, collaborative practice and bidirectional referrals are emphasized. Where chaplains are unavailable, SCNs work within nursing competencies and establish referral relationships with external spiritual care resources when needed.

9. How can a healthcare organization explore implementing Spiritual Care Nursing?

Organizations can begin by identifying interested nursing leaders, reviewing the Spiritual Care Nursing Certificate Program, and exploring how specialized spiritual nursing care could be integrated into existing nursing and interdisciplinary care structures. The Westberg Institute can provide information about education, implementation considerations, and professional collaboration.

10. How can I learn more or help introduce Spiritual Care Nursing?

Nurses, educators, and healthcare leaders are invited to connect with the Westberg Institute to learn about Spiritual Care Nursing education, professional certification, organizational implementation, and opportunities to serve as Advocates.

Westberg Institute for Nursing, a division of the Spiritual Care Association
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