

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

*A*s we approach the holy month of Ramadan and a vast population of the nation prepares, physically, mentally and spiritually for the strenuous, but very welcome month long fasting through the days, I can't help but get a little reflective about prayers and the place of spirituality in medical treatment! There are medical personnel, who are unsure of touching a patient's spiritual life, asking them about their religious practices or even unsure if the patients ask them to join prayers with them. And then there are the other types, who actively participate with patients in prayers, advise patients to pray regularly and to who, prayer and a pair of forceps, are complementary to one another.

While I do not want to comment on who serves the patient better, as being competent and dedicated necessarily doesn't mean that you have to touch the spiritual lives of patients, I would like to point out that we should not stay away from such topics just by labeling them as 'too personal', as to me, being a nurse is all about getting up, close and personal. Besides, there is a practical aspect to it as well. Knowing a patient's religion and being aware of her/his religious customs better equip us to get their cooperation. For example, the mere act of touching can be a way of making a person feel that you are there for her/him, or make her/him suspicious of your nature. What a person believes to be a benevolent nature or misconduct can also depend largely on her/his long held religious belief.

The past few decades have seen too many experiments and studies, most proving the fact that patients who pray or even patients who are prayed for, have a greater chance of recovery and recover sooner. To fatally ill patients, who believe that they are going to a better place, it brings more comfort and strength. For others, Faith brings hope and positive attitude, which makes the healing process more effective. Prayers are seen to help a person to cope with feelings of injustice (the 'why me?' attitude) or deal well with their emotions in situations where someone else is responsible for their conditions.

More and more doctors, paramedics, nurses, allied health professionals and patients, of different countries and religions, are reporting on the emphasis they put in prayers and the positive and often miraculous results they receive. Practised as an aid to treatment, when prayers don't oppose with medical procedures in any way, we should give a serious thought to spiritual practices in direct connection with patient care. Who knows, this apparently backward step may take us many steps forward.

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