

Correspondence

Wounded healers: a call for spiritual care towards healthcare professionals in time of COVID-19 pandemic

ABSTRACT

In recent correspondences and articles published, the role of religious and spiritual interventions has been discussed for the attention of the medical community in the time of COVID-19 pandemic and part of these interventions is to provide spiritual care. Attention has been given to provide spiritual care among COVID-19 patients. However, there is also a dire need to offer spiritual care towards healthcare professionals because they, too, are 'wounded healers'. This paper discusses the urgent call for the medical and spiritual communities to come up with comprehensive spiritual care programme for healthcare professionals so that they may attain spiritual well-being as they serve in the frontlines, risking their lives and providing spiritual care to patients especially in this trying times of the pandemic as a public health crisis.

Keywords COVID-19, healthcare professionals, public health, spiritual care, wounded healers

To the Editor,

In recent correspondences, religious and spiritual interventions, spirituality, health-concerning spirituality in this times of COVID-19 have been presented.^{1–3} Much of the discussions focused on the role of spirituality and religion in addressing public health crisis in time of COVID-19. Among the medical community, special attention is given to COVID-19 patients that they should be given spiritual care. However, there are only a few discussions within the medical and spiritual communities regarding the significance of providing spiritual care to healthcare professionals. For almost a year since the COVID-19 pandemic commenced, healthcare professionals have been on the frontlines providing medical services to the afflicted members of society. They have been exposed to physical exhaustion, emotional and psychological stress, and spiritual distress. Healthcare professionals 'risk their lives to save people who have COVID-19 while promoting compassionate care'.⁴

Thus, we can say that healthcare professionals are 'wounded healers'.⁵ In a recent article, authors who are themselves healthcare professionals especially in palliative care mentioned, 'We are the wounded healers - called to recognize the sufferings of this time in our own hearts and make that recognition the starting point of our service. We need to carefully address the spiritual needs of our teams

and colleagues'.⁶ There is a necessity to provide spiritual care among all those affected by the COVID-19 such as the patients and their families as well as healthcare workers during this pandemic so that they may cope up and achieve well-being.⁴

Hence, there is a need to come up with a comprehensive spiritual care programme for healthcare professionals who are serving as 'frontliners' especially in medical facilities such as hospitals and quarantine sites. 'The role of faith and spiritual care for staff, particularly those struggling with decisions made and their results, is imperative and should be actively offered by multifaith/non-faith Chaplaincy/Spiritual Care teams'.⁷ Religions around the world can exert their efforts together in interreligious dialogue⁸ in this time of pandemic to materialize the call to provide spiritual care for the healthcare professionals regardless of faith and religious denominations. The program may include spiritual counselling, worship services, meditation, bible sharing and the like. These activities can be done even using many online platforms such as worship services and liturgies to augment the spiritual needs of the healthcare professionals.⁹ After all, they are wounded healers who also need spiritual care. They, too, deserve to be prayed for, to be given spiritual accompaniment, and most especially be given importance because of their selfless dedication and service in this time of pandemic as a public health crisis.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest in this paper.

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