



Spirituality: what is it?

Evidence from NZ Hospice Study

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Study participants

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Overview

- Introduction (author, context, studies)
- Results (qualitative & quantitative)
- Discussion
 - Other research (overseas / NZ)
 - Criticisms
 - Definitions reflect worldview
 - Definition typology
- Conclusions / Recommendations

Introduction

- “It is important to locate the researcher’s lens so as to understand how these lenses might influence the research process because the researcher is the instrument. (Yick, 2008 #352@1290).
- How one understands, studies and explains spirituality may be considered as much related to the individual researcher’s beliefs and worldview, as to his or her discipline, methods or subjects (Berry, 2005 #60; Schneiders, 1989 #503@694)

Introduction – Context

Re-emergence of spirituality (in health)

- **Spiritual vacuum** (Frankl, 1984; Taylor, 2007)
- **Bio ----- biopsychosocialspiritual continuum** (Sulmasy, 2002; Puchalski, 2006)
- **Growth in academic interest** (Stefanek, 2005; Williams, 2006)
- **Patient-led / bottom up** (Tacey, 2005; McCord, 2004)
- **Maori contributions / aspirations** (Durie, 1998; Rochford, 2004)
- **Policy, guidelines, curricula** (NZ Health Strategy (2000), Palliative Care Strategy (2001), NZ State School Curricula (1999), Treaty of Waitangi, UK National Health Service)
- **Disentwining thesis** (Arai et al, 1989, World Council of Churches)
- ..., **globalization, democratization (of belief), pluralism, postmodernism...**

Study Overview

Topic: Spirituality in NZ End-of-life Cancer Care (hospice focus)

Aim: to investigate and improve understandings and practices of spirituality in New Zealand hospice care

Context: Palliative care services: *integrates physical (tinana), social (whānau), emotional (hinengaro) and spiritual (wairua) aspects of care to help the dying person and their family/whānau attain an acceptable quality of life.*

(NZ Palliative Care Strategy, Ministry of Health, 2001)

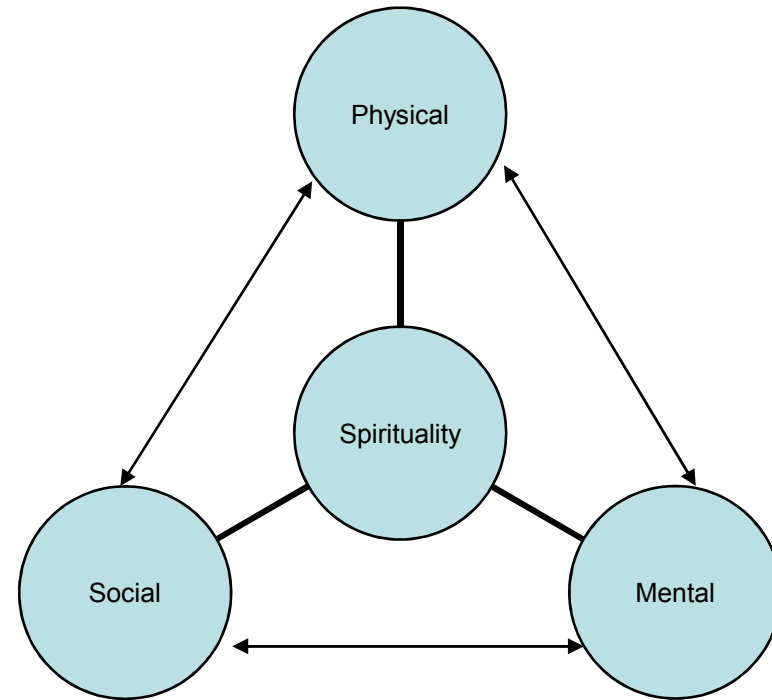
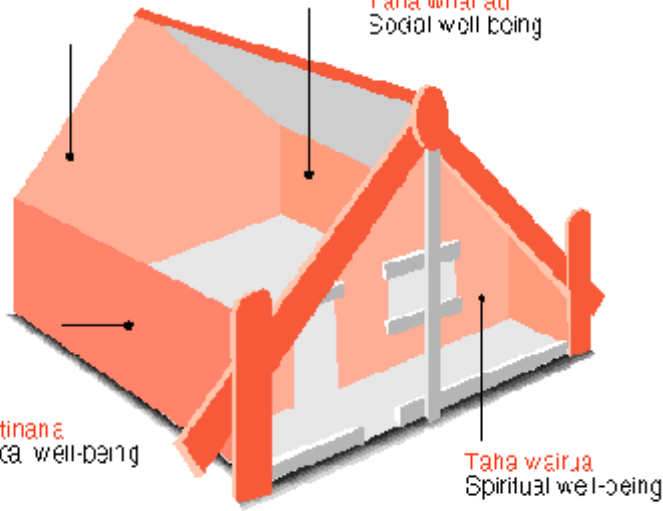
Te Whare Tapa Wha & Integrative Model

Taha hinengaro
Mental and
emotional well-being

Taha wharau
Social well-being

Taha tinana
Physical well-being

Taha wairua
Spiritual well-being



Research Design: Method

Pilot study: 'interview' and 'survey' piloted at the Otago Community Hospice.
Focus group with Otago Cancer Society

Populations: patients, family members, staff, chaplains, Maori experts

Study 1: 52 interviews (24 patients, 9 family members, 8 staff, 8 chaplains/spiritual carers, 3 Māori experts).

Analysis Study 1: recorded interviews; systematic write up after each interview ;
transcribed; thematic coding

Study 2: surveyed 25 New Zealand's hospices (response rate 59%).

Analysis Study 2: returned surveys logged; data input; analysis using STATA

Working Definition:

Please note: 'spirituality' means different things to different people. In this study, spirituality includes beliefs, values, sense of meaning and purpose, identity, and for some people religion.

Thesis Questions and Results

Thesis Questions

- What does spirituality mean for those affected by terminal illness?
- What are their spiritual needs?
- What do Māori say about spirituality / spiritual care?
- How can spiritual care be improved?

Results: Meta-themes

- Spirituality Definitions
- Spiritual Practices and beliefs
- Spiritual Needs and Care

Study 1: Definition One Liners

- *I really struggle with the definition of the word (Carl, 62, education, Ca),*
- *never gave it a thought (Frank, 75, photography, Ca);*
- *how one looks at the world and oneself (Henry, 76, finance, Ca)*
- *it extends to my whole being, relationships and where I am in this world (Ida, 45, hospice nurse).*
- *I think being spiritual is being a good Christian (Aida, 65, hospitality, FM)*
- *it is the essence of who I am (Abigail, 64, chaplain)*
- *“[it] embraces the essence of what it means to be human. (Damien, a 55, spiritual carer)*

Study 1: Definition Themes

Religious/transcendent Responses

- “Old Fashion Concept of Religion”
- Religion equals Spirituality
- Religion as One Expression of Spirituality
- Spirituality as the extra-ordinary

Humanist/existential Responses

- Beliefs / Values / Ethics
- Meaning and Purpose
- Core / essence / identity /well-being
- Relational / integration / wholeness
- Aesthetic
- Mindfulness

Summative/Integrative Responses

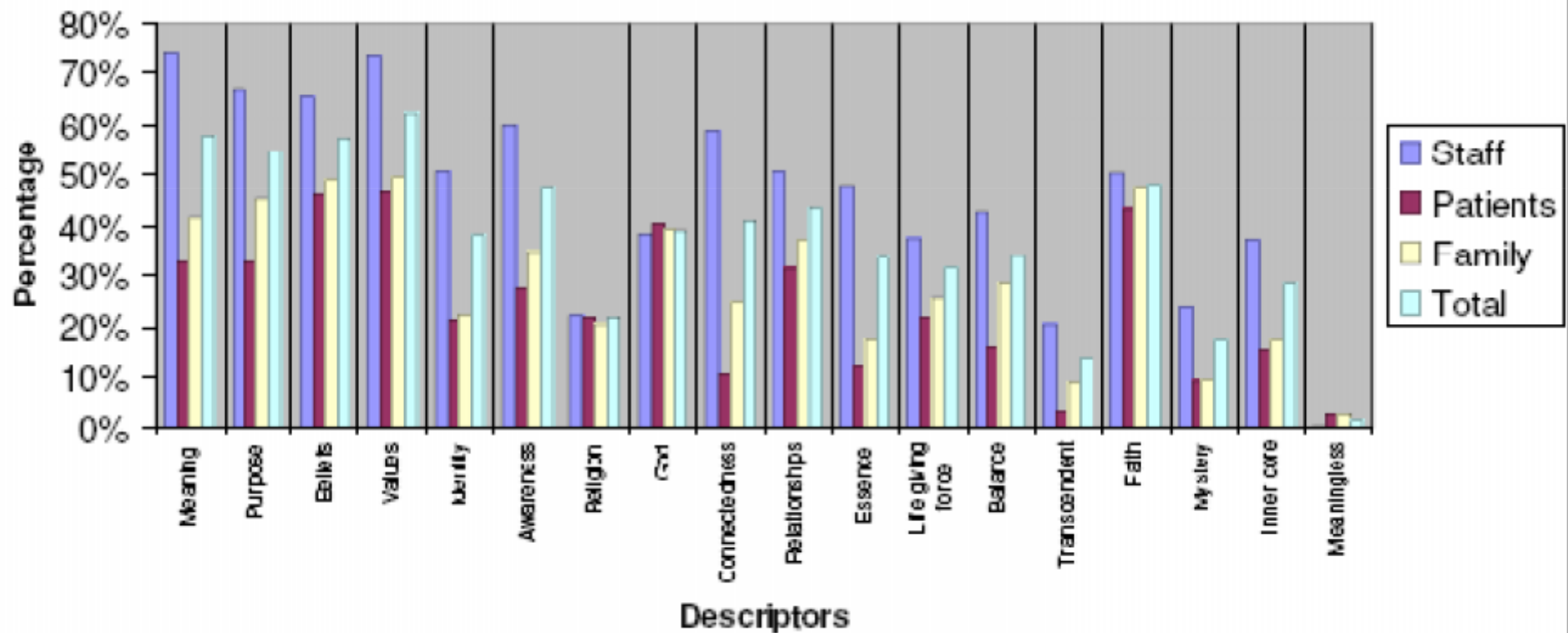
Most participants' definitions included a range of descriptors, drawing from the religious and existential; these definitions were categorized as summative or inclusive responses.

Maori expert's view of spirituality

- Te taha wairua is generally felt by Māori to be the most essential requirement for health (Durie, 1998b, p. 72)
- “one of the single most important words is about connecting and connecting generations, connecting families, ... that connection between people”. ... “we know there is the spiritual stuff because the spiritual stuff is connected with the past and the future.
(Dr Ngata, thesis interview)
- “I call it communion, .., communion in being able to commune with something, ..., inanimate or person”.
(Peter, thesis interview)

Study 2: Definition Descriptors

Spiritual Definition Options



Literature Overview

1. Definition – a ubiquitous issue
2. Discourse dependent (country, community, demographic, culture, academic, religion)
3. Spirituality religion relationship some agreement
4. No consensus / gold standard definition
5. Commonalities
6. Universal?
7. Assessment / care / carer / ethics
8. Criticisms

Definitions reflects worldview

Framework: spirituality in healthcare literature

- Biomedical
- Biopsychosocial
- Social (holistic)

(Rumbold, 2007)

Spirituality Definitions

Definition typology / categories:

1. Religious / transcendent approach
2. Behavioural / secular / humanist / existential
3. Summative / integrative / inclusive
4. Other

Conclusions / Recommendations

Develop:

- NZ Spirituality Definition Consensus Project (a working definition)
- NZ academic/research spirituality group (e-discussions etc...)

Conclusions / Recommendations

Advocate

- For spirituality to be recognized
 - Ministry of Health / Education / Social Development / Treasury ...
 - Pre-service healthcare professional training
 - In-service training
 - As a Treaty / inequalities issue

Conclusions / Recommendations

Promote

- Further research and evidence to inform spiritual care

The meaning of life?



People study for weeks for a birth.
Why not study for a death?

Anastasios, A. Dying to know: Bringing death to life. 2007, p.1

**‘Ko te Amorangi ki mua, ki te hapai o ki
muri’**

**‘Place the things of the Spirit to the fore,
and all else shall follow behind’**

**Takitimu whakatauaki (proverb)
(Payne, Tankersley, & McNaughton A (Ed), 2003, p. 85)**

Definition Commonalities in Literature

Unruh found 92 definitions which he categorized into seven themes:

1. relationship to God, a spiritual being, a higher power, or a reality greater than the self;
2. not of the self;
3. transcendence or connectedness unrelated to a belief in a higher being;
4. existential, not of the material world;
5. meaning and purpose in life;
6. life force of the person, integrating aspect of the person;
7. summative (Unruh, et al., 2002, p. 7).

Thesis Survey Response Rates

Table 5.4 Survey response rates

	Survey No's sent by Researcher	Survey #s Given Out by Hospice Key Contact	Surveys Received by Researcher	Response Rate
Staff	600	550	364	66.16%
Patients	415	277	141	50.90%
Family Members	403	269	137	50.92%
Totals	1418	1096	642	58.57%

Relationship between spiritual well-being and spiritual distress

Spirituality components	Spiritual distress
Values, beliefs, hope	Valuelessness, normlessness, angst, fear
Meaning, purpose	Meaninglessness, ennui, hopelessness, despair
Awareness	Uncertainty, lack of awareness
Transcendence, religiosity	Self centered, religious pain/guilt
Identity, relationships, connectedness	Dissolution, disconnection, isolation, guilt

Patient Participants What is Spirituality?
"it is a very hard one"

No Explanation (2)
"I just have no idea." Jill

Religion = Spirituality (8)
"Old fashion concept of religion"
"religion or that spirituality... a reality is as real as the world"
"faith" All Christian

Ineffable / Mystery:
"some things that are more than what we can teach or read"

Religion: part of Spirituality:
"I think of religion ... in terms of assisting my spirituality"

Spirituality as Metaphysical or Transcendent (4):

"Spirits, actual spirits and dealing with seeing spirits"
"that our body's have a soul or spirit or whatever you like to call it."
"The spirit carries on after life"
To do with "séances"

Existential / Humanist (12)

Beliefs (5) / Ethics

- ~~spirituality~~
- ~~faith~~
- ~~all~~
"I think its personal and a belief and I think that every body has it and if they are saying they haven't they are stupid"

Essence / Core

- ~~identity~~
- ~~being~~
"sense of self, sense of where you are and who you are"

Well Being:

"to me is about being - my inner well being"
"a belief in myself to live a decent life and get as much enjoyment out of it as possible"

Chaplain
Participants
What is Spirituality?

Integrated (n = 8)

Includes:
Values,
Identity,
Beliefs,
M & P,
Connectedness,
Integration/wholeness,
Metaphysical/mystery,
Form/content

Existential / Humanist
Related
(n=9)

Religion (n=3) /
Transcendent Related
(n=2)

"those sort of models that
separate spirituality out
that I struggle with"

"Spirituality has to do with the values
that we hold most dear, our sense of
who we are and where we come
from, our beliefs about why we are
here - the meaning and purpose that
we see in our work and our life - and
our sense of connectedness to each
other and the world around us.
Spirituality can also have to do with
aspects of our experience that are
not easy to define or talk about, such
things as intuition, inspiration, the
mysterious and the mystical."

"our whole being is
connected with our
spirituality"

"Three ideas.....
[1] meaning and purpose in
life...
[2] that dimension of life
that brings a sense of
wholeness or integration,
[3] transcendence"

"impulse that works in
humans to harmonise
deep factors of life"

"Well being is
addressing those four
corner stones, the
physical, the
psychological, the
social and the
spiritual."

Study 1 Interview Results

Religious: “I do see it as religion” (nurse)

Existential: “I believe it’s about belief systems”
(patient)

Summative: “[it] embraces the essence of what it means to be human. It is concerned with personhood, identity and meaning and purpose in life. The spirit holds together the physical, psychological and social dimension of life”
(chaplain)

Staff Definition Descriptors (weighted)

