

The European Network of Healthcare Chaplaincy

Statement - Healthcare Chaplaincy in the Midst of Transition



Introduction

This statement is intended as a resource to:

- Stimulate discussion and debate amongst the European healthcare chaplaincy community.
- Help leaders and managers of healthcare organisations and faith communities to better understand the role and vision of healthcare chaplains.
- Inform other healthcare and faith community workers of the breadth of healthcare chaplaincy and its trends across Europe.

Setting the Context

Healthcare chaplains are working in the midst of transition, with healthcare changing rapidly across the world. Such change gives chaplains opportunities to actively and innovatively contribute to "humane" healthcare systems by providing the best spiritual care possible for all.

Best Spiritual Care

Facing such transition, healthcare chaplains must be rooted in, and practise from, their own faith, beliefs and values. They must continually update their professional skills. They must also reflect theologically and spiritually on their activities as well as on their cultural and social context. Such an ongoing deepening awareness enables chaplains to work with integrity with others from different worldviews and faiths.

Healthcare chaplains are specialists in giving spiritual care, whilst maintaining a holistic view of persons in relational communities, whether they be patients, significant others or staff members.

Chaplains work collaboratively with others in healthcare contexts to create ethical and meaningful healing communities building upon core values such as love, compassion and justice, which are integral to all faith and belief groups.

Research Imperative

Although it is not straightforward to evaluate spiritual care practice it is important to conduct research in order to improve the quality of care. Therefore, the European healthcare chaplaincy community actively promotes research as an integral part of chaplaincy activity. This research must measure "outcomes" rather than "processes". All chaplains must develop their ongoing practice in the light of current research.

Research is a vital part of today's healthcare. Care delivered by chaplains must also be informed by research that is practice based. Chaplains are well equipped to conduct narrative research because listening to and interpreting patients' stories is a core part of their work. They can use and develop strategic alliances with other healthcare disciplines in research.

Sharing research findings will also inform healthcare providers and faith communities of the role and importance of chaplaincy and thus promote chaplaincy services.

Call to Action

In order to provide "Best Spiritual Care", we call upon:

All **chaplains** to keep informed of current research and to develop their practice in the light of this. Some chaplains to lead the research agenda to ensure that high quality research is conducted into healthcare chaplaincy outcomes.

Healthcare providers to require their chaplains to develop their practice in the light of current research and to support those chaplains who conduct research.

Faith and belief communities to support models of healthcare chaplaincy that are research based.