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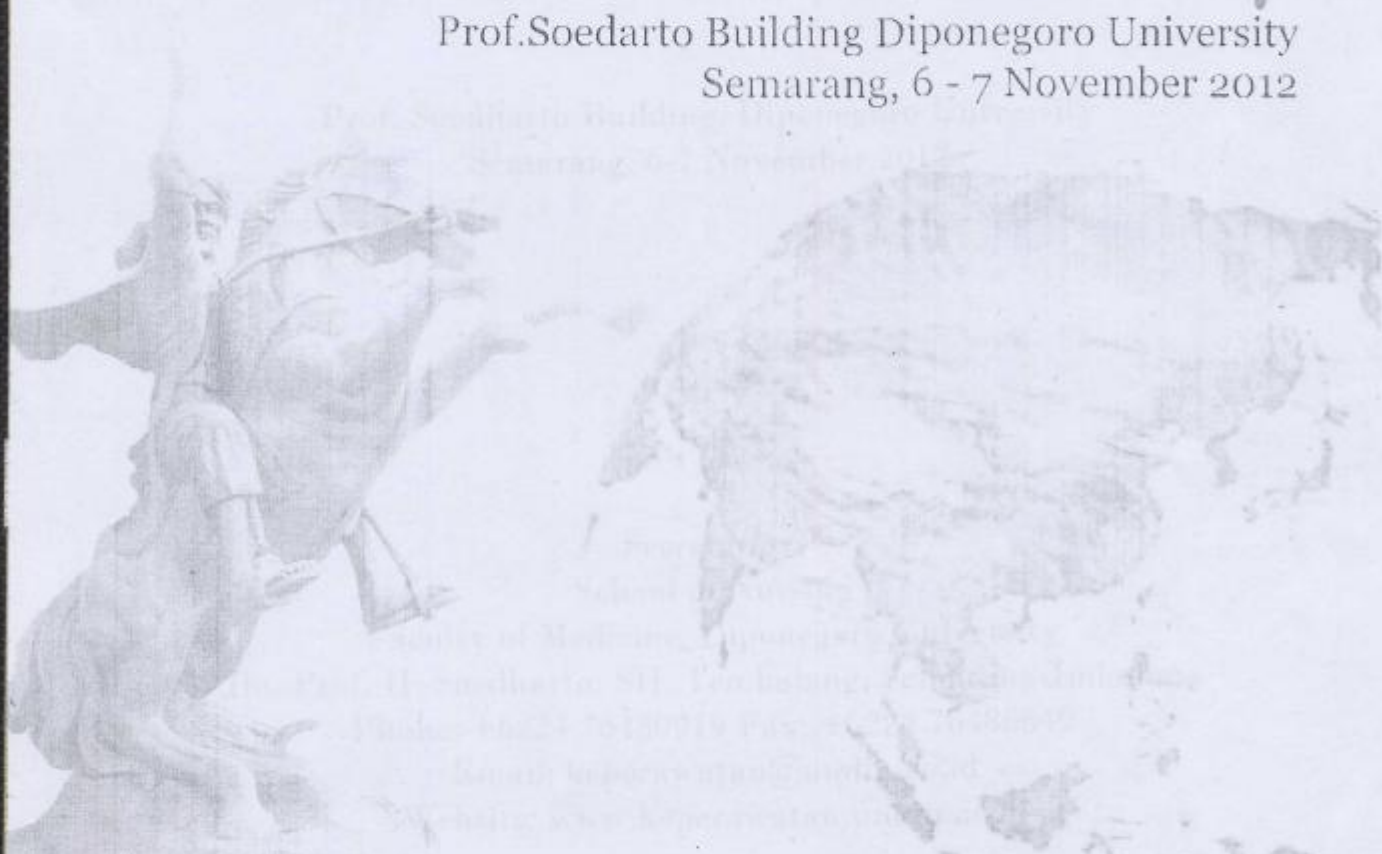
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# 2<sup>nd</sup> Java International Nursing Conference 2012

## "East Meets West on Holistic Nursing"

Prof. Soedarto Building Diponegoro University  
Semarang, 6 - 7 November 2012



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## THE SPIRITUALITY NEEDS OF TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Spiritual care is important and should be fulfilled by caregivers, especially for terminally ill patients, however many of the caregivers are still focusing on their physical problems rather than meeting spiritual needs. Moreover many nurses in Indonesia have perspective that spirituality has the same meaning as religion. **Purpose:** To conduct a review about spiritual needs of terminally ill patients in relation to clinical practice. **Method:** A literature search was conducted through MEDLINE and CINAHL, by using the key words meaning or essence of spirituality, spiritual care and critical care or dying or terminal illness or serious illness. It found 55 articles; consist of 35 articles with qualitative research method and 15 articles with quantitative research method. Only eight articles meet the criteria, namely: 1). Full text; 2). Using qualitative research methods; 3). Participants were patients with terminal illness or serious illness 4). Hospital based. **Result:** The spiritual journey of terminally ill patient is initiated with the experience of spiritual pain, and terminated with spiritual comfort. In order to get their spiritual comfort, the patients with terminal illness need to fulfill their spiritual necessity which are consist of the need for answers about the meaning and purpose of life and needs to be loved and needs related to transcendence. To assist patients achieve their spiritual needs and comfort, nurses and caregivers could facilitate through being present, opening eyes and concreting. **Discussion:** Spiritual needs of terminal ill patients not only emerge from religion or transcendence. To achieve spirituality comfort in terminal illness patients is required connectedness between transcendence and others. Human needs to be loved, cared for and give to others. Thus to meet their spiritual needs, nurses have to facilitate not only their worship but also empathy, love, and caring to the patients. Ultimately it is expected that patients might die in peace and dignity. **Conclusion:** The spirituality needs of terminally ill patients consist of the realization about meaning and purpose of life, the connectedness with others and transcendence either. Nurses could deliver the spirituality needs through being present, opening eyes and concreting.

**Keywords :** Needs, Spirituality, Terminal Illness

## **The Spirituality Needs of Terminally Ill Patients (A Literature Review)**

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## BACKGROUND

Based on holistic care view to get healing is needed not only physically treatment but also psychology and spiritual care. Especially in patients with severe illness or terminally ill because the treatment was not able to cure them.

Several studies mentioned that spiritual care is an important thing for terminally ill. It is as stated in a study conducted by Murray (2004) in dying patients with heart failure and lung cancer. However the majority of health care providers lack the time and ability to provide spiritual care. Many of them are still focusing on patients' physical problems rather than meeting their spiritual needs.

The patients' spiritual needs fulfillment is an important part of holistic care (Mok, Wong, & Wong, 2009). Based on Western literatures spirituality associated with connectedness, belief, and hope. Spirituality have a broader sense of religious practices which include the meaning of human existence. However many nurses in Indonesia have perspective that spirituality has the same meaning as religion.

According to Guillory et al (1997) patients with terminal illnesses, would be looking for the meaning of life as a way to prolong their survival. This statement is supported by Mok, Wong and Wong (2009), according to them the source of healing for patients with terminal illness is spiritual. When there is no way to recover, the client's attention will focus on understanding the processes of life and engagement with the highest power. It was further confirmed by Frankl (in Guillory, 1997) that the search for meaning and life purpose is the essence of a human existence.

The needs of spirituality of each person is different, depending on his perspective and background. Spirituality is personal or individual (Burhardt & Nagai-Jacobson, 2005; Hawari, 2002). The differences of spirituality concept are influenced by culture, development, life's experiences and one's perception of life and living. These effects could alter one's view about the spiritual concepts in themselves accordance with their understanding and beliefs. In other words, spirituality in every person is still a mystery.

## METHOD

A literature search was conducted through MEDLINE and CINAHL by using the key words meaning or essence of spirituality, spiritual care and critical care or

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** *Spiritual care is important and should be fulfilled by caregivers, especially for terminally ill patients, however many of the caregivers are still focusing on their physical problems rather than meeting spiritual needs. Moreover many nurses in Indonesia have perspective that spirituality has the same meaning as religion.*

**Purpose :** *To conduct a review about spiritual needs of terminally ill patients in relation to clinical practice.*

**Method:** *A literature search was conducted through MEDLINE and CINAHL by using the key words meaning or essence of spirituality, spiritual care and critical care or dying or terminal illness or serious illness. It found 55 articles; consist of 35 articles with qualitative research method and 15 articles with quantitative research method. Only eight articles meet the criteria, namely: 1). Full text; 2). Using qualitative research methods; 3). Participants were patients with terminal illness or serious illness 4). Hospital based; 5). Written in english.*

**Result:***The spiritual journey of terminally ill patient is initiated with the experience of spiritual pain, and terminated with spiritual comfort. In order to get their spiritual comfort, the patients with terminal illness need to fulfill their spiritual necessity which are consist of the need for answers about the meaning and purpose of life and needs to be loved and needs related to transcendence. To assist patients achieve their spiritual needs and comfort, nurses and caregivers could facilitate through being present, opening eyes and cocreating.*

**Discussion:** *Spiritual needs of terminal ill patients not only emerge from religion or transcendence. To achieve spirituality comfort in terminal illness patients is required connectedness between transcendence and others. Human needs to be loved, cared for and give to others. Thus to meet their spiritual needs, nurses have to facilitate not only their worship but also empathy, love, and caring to the patients. Ultimately it is expected that patients might die in peace and dignity.*

**Conclusion***The spirituality needs of terminally ill patients consist of the realization about meaning and purpose of life, the connectedness with others and transcendence either. Nurses could deliver the spirituality needs through being present, opening eyes and cocreating.*

*Key words :Needs, Spirituality, Terminal illness*

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## RESULT FINDINGS

### A. Spirituality Journey in Patients with Serious Illness

According to Mcgrath (2004) the spiritual journey of terminally ill patient is initiated with the experience of spiritual pain. Due to serious illness, facing painful treatments, and medical measures with highly risk. The patient was confronting with death. This condition called "spiritual pain". According to them life doesn't has meaning. However, over the passage of their spiritual journey, it would be encourage them to be able to explore their life and realize how fragile itself and this would lead them to think further about the purpose and meaning of their lives. When coping which was done successfully then the journey will end with the discovery of "spiritual comfort".

Begins with spiritual pain, then they will start thinking about life and consider that :

1. Everything happens for a reason.
2. Chosen or saved for a reason
3. A journey for ever.
4. Seeing the illness/treatment as a challenge
5. Need to take responsibility for the journey
6. Need to do the journey
7. Making sense of the illness
8. Proud of how handled the journey
9. Positif outcomes
10. Personal growth
11. Lucky to have journey
12. A changed person



It is not easy to get spiritual comfort. Nurse role to facilitate the conflicts that occur when a patients is experiencing spiritual pain to find spiritual comfort. Ultimately it is expected that patients might die in peace and dignity.

## **B. Spiritual Needs of Patients in Terminal Illness**

*Spiritual needs of patients in terminal illness conditions consist of the need for answers about the meaning and purpose of life and needs to be loved and needs related to transcendence both in patients who claim to believe in God or not (Mcgrath, 2004; Murray, 2004).*

Depression can be experienced by patients, when they think their life are useless and be a burden to others. A good relationship with family is one of the things that help them release from their sadness and make them stronger than before. In it they have the opportunity to express love and to be loved. Moreover feel connected with their social makes them feel more powerful and useful. The activities of worship and prayer for some religious patients could also support and strengthen their lives.

The spiritual journey of terminally ill patient is initiated with the experience of spiritual pain, and terminated with spiritual comfort. To assist the patients to achieve their spiritual comfort, nurses and caregivers could facilitate through being present, opening eyes and cocreating (Daaleman, et al, 2008) .

### **1. Being present**

It is characterized by physical proximity between the patient and nurses or caregivers. Nurse or caregivers give full attention to the patients intentionally, regarding the patient's emotional, social and spiritual needs. Another study noted that patients also need closeness with family members to raise his spirits (Murray, 2004).

### **2. Opening eyes**

The nurses or caregivers concerned about patient's life and patient's current pain experience. Nurses try to understand the patients's perception about their suffer. According to patients, it allowed them to identify of their internal and external strength.

### 3. Cocreating

Cocreating is the terminology used to describe a relationship between patients, nurses, caregivers and family in making a holistic care plan that focuses on keeping the patient's humanity and dignity in the face of death.

Ultimately it is expected that patients might die in peace and dignity.

## DISCUSSION

Spiritual needs of terminal ill patients not only emerge from religion or transcendence. To achieve spirituality comfort in terminal illness patients is required connectedness between transcendence and others (Chao, et al, 2002; Walton, 2002). It involves the relationship between patient with self, God, human and nature. And It requires a balance of giving and receiving. (Walton, 2002).

The connectedness with the highest power or transcendence can increase self reliance and peacefulness due to resignation. This statement supported by several researches. Those state that faith is important for the patients in different way and various reasons. The key to get peace when facing a crisis is the belief in God. (Chao, Chen, & Yen, 2002; Guillory et al, 1997; Mok et al, 2009; Nabolsi dan Carson, 2011; Walton, 2002).

Human needs to be loved, cared for and give to others (giving and receiving). Love and the connection with mean people is the most powerful resources that inspired them. Besides the nurse presense through caring is also mean for the patients (Chao et al, 2002; Guillory et al, 1997; Mok, et al, 2009). Thus to meet their spiritual needs, nurses have to facilitate not only their worship but also empathy, love, and caring to the patients. One of the nurses role for the terminally ill patients is helping patients to die with peace and dignity. Ultimately by delivering a good spirituality care for them it is expected that nurses can perform that role properly.

## CONCLUSION

The spirituality needs of terminally ill patients not just religion alone yet consist of the realization about meaning and purpose of life, the connectedness with others and transcendence either. To undertake the nurses role in meeting the spiritual needs of terminally ill patients, nurses could deliver the spirituality needs through being present, opening eyes and cocreating.

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