

Is the Practice of Spiritual Care by Health Professionals Ethical?



Jennifer Jung, MD

Objectives

- Demonstrate that “**spiritual care in medicine**” is **highly ethical**- according to the rules of standard medical ethics
- Review the **medical literature** regarding spiritual care in medicine
- **Give you tools and confidence** to practice spiritual care in an ethical manner*

What is Spiritual Care?

- “Spiritual”: search for meaning and purpose in the Sacred
- Question—
 - Is it ethical to bring the spiritual into patient care?
 - If “Yes,” what ethical issues should guide spiritual care?

Biblical Perspective



Biblical Perspective

- Patients' greatest need is spiritual

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- Some physical diseases are spiritually based

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Broken relationship with God

Broken relationship with others

Broken relationship with self

Biblical Perspective

- Patients' greatest need is spiritual
- Some physical diseases are spiritually based
- Jesus modeled healing *physical AND spiritual* needs **together** (Mark 2:1-12)

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- God hears prayers for healing and can heal

Biblical Perspective

- Patients' greatest need is spiritual
- Some physical diseases are spiritually based
- Jesus modeled healing physical and spiritual needs together
- God hears prayers for healing and can heal
- All things for His Kingdom- even my profession

But is it Ethical...?



But is it Ethical...?



But is it Ethical...?



“ How can you talk
about God and religion
with your patients?
Isn't that UNETHICAL
??!!

Ethical:

Being in accordance with the **rules or standards** for right conduct or practice, especially the standards of a profession; pertaining to **right and wrong** in conduct¹

ethical. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Retrieved May 30, 2014, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/ethical>

Tenants of Medical Ethics

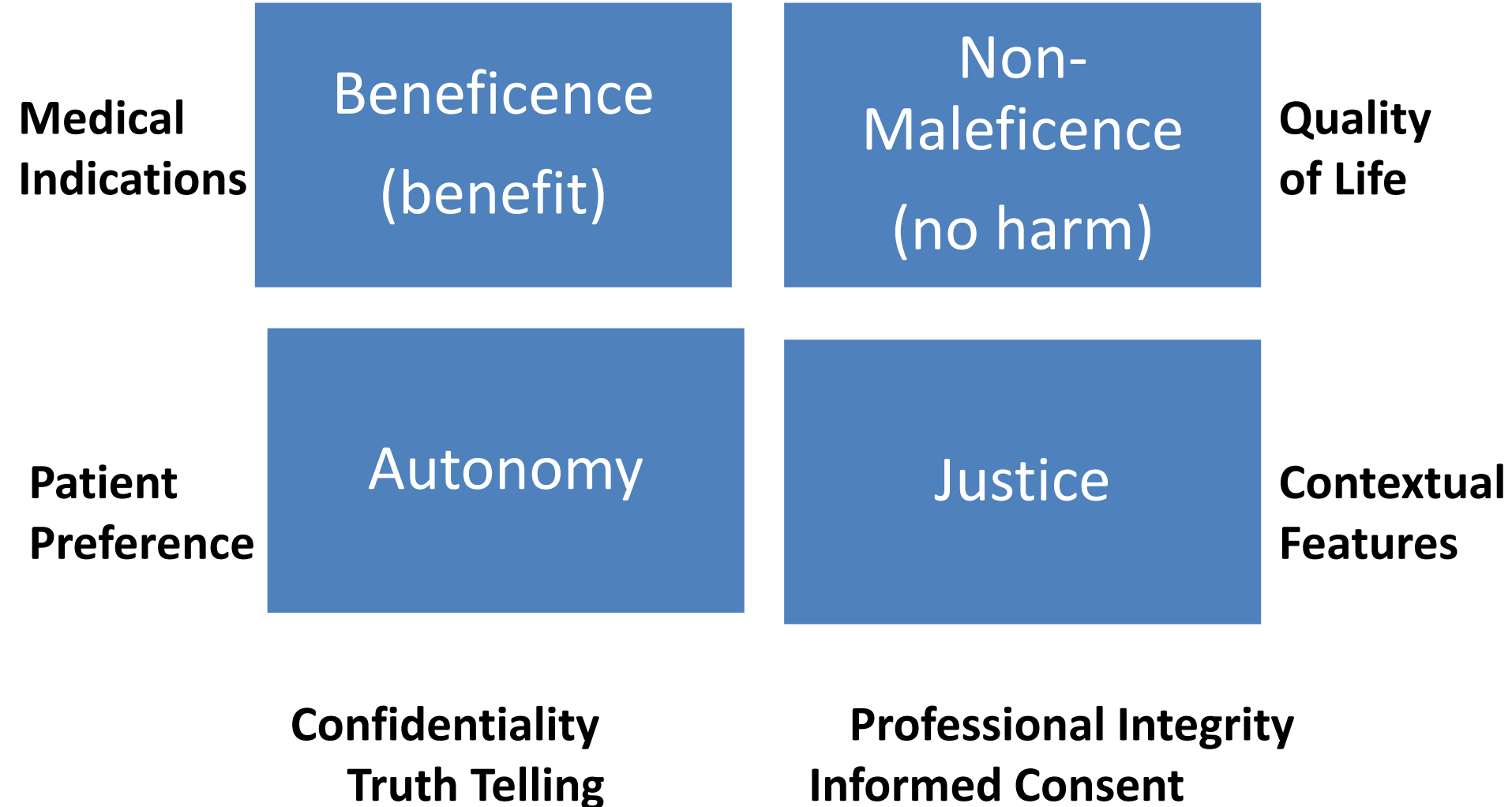
Beneficence
(benefit)

Non-
Maleficence
(no harm)

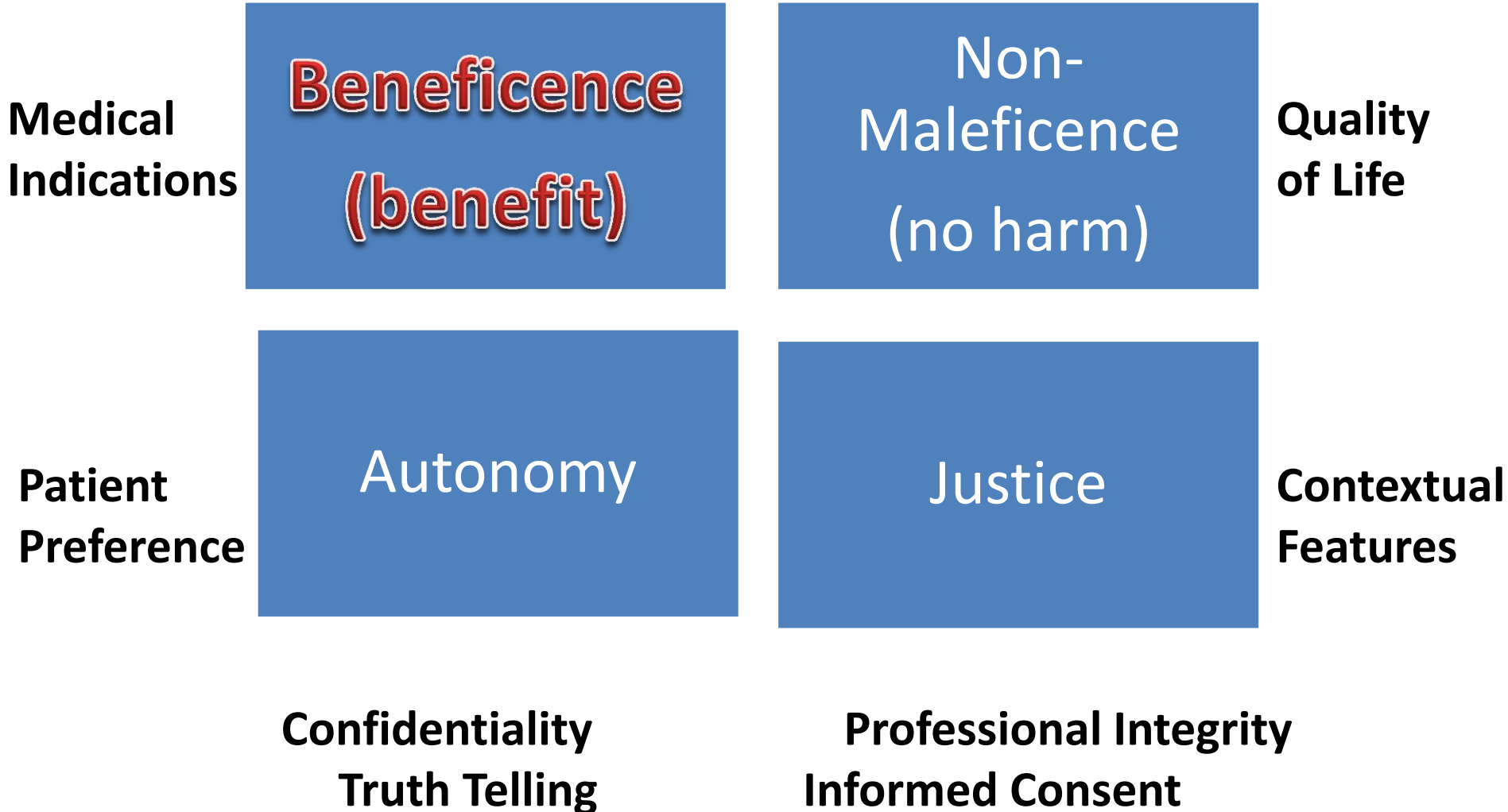
Autonomy

Justice

Tenants of Medical Ethics



Tenants of Medical Ethics

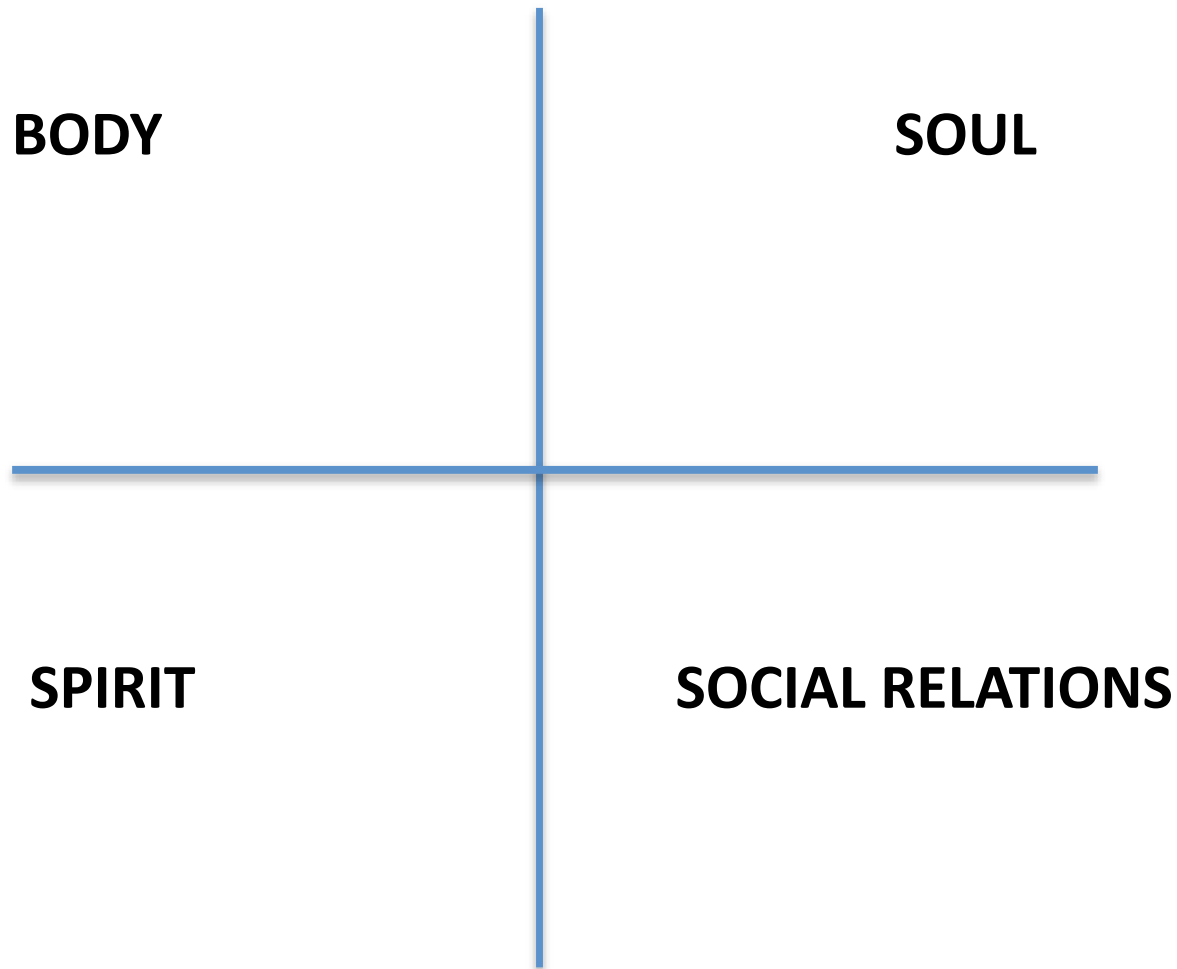


What are the Benefits??

There are benefits in understanding and addressing your patients spirituality because :

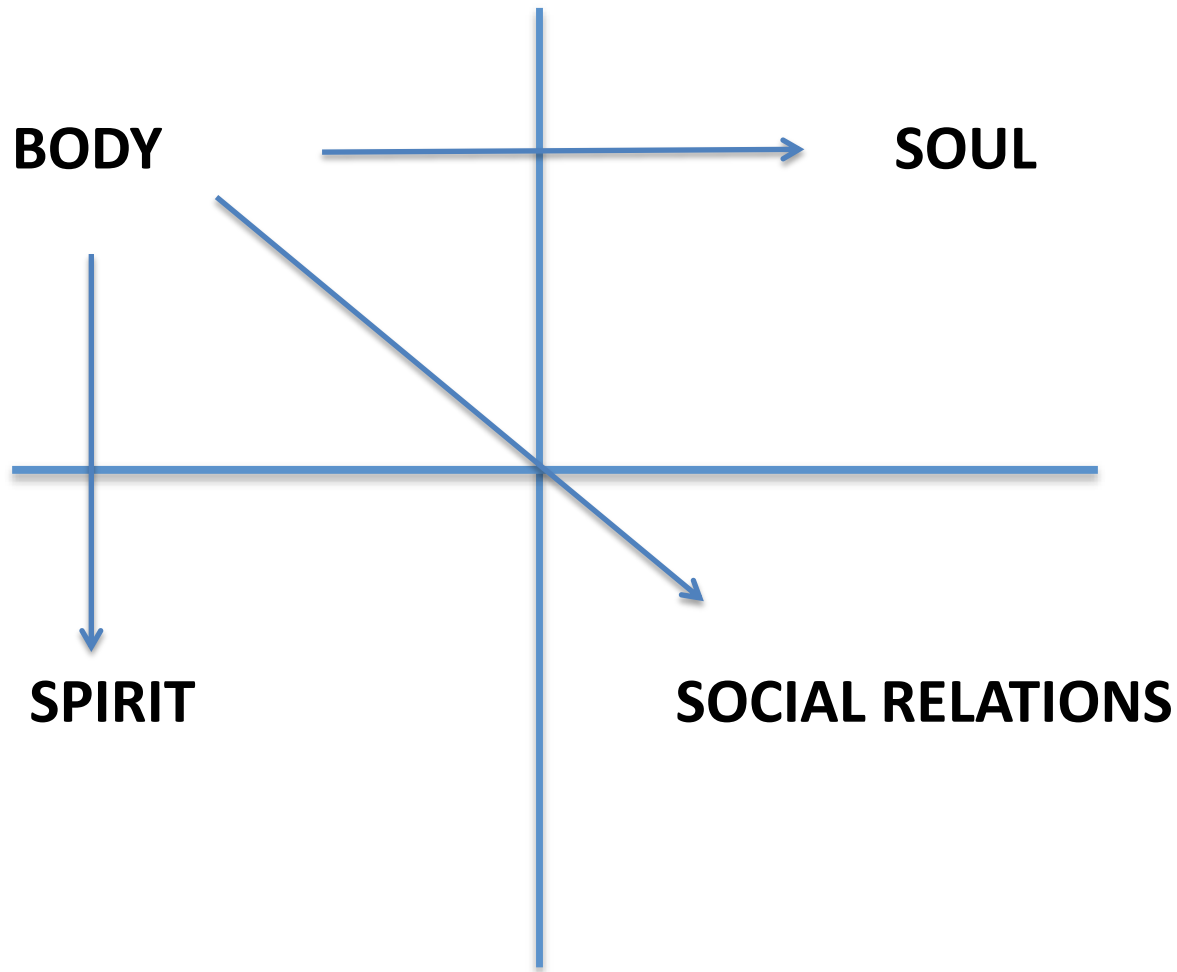
Spirituality affects health!

Whole Person Perspective

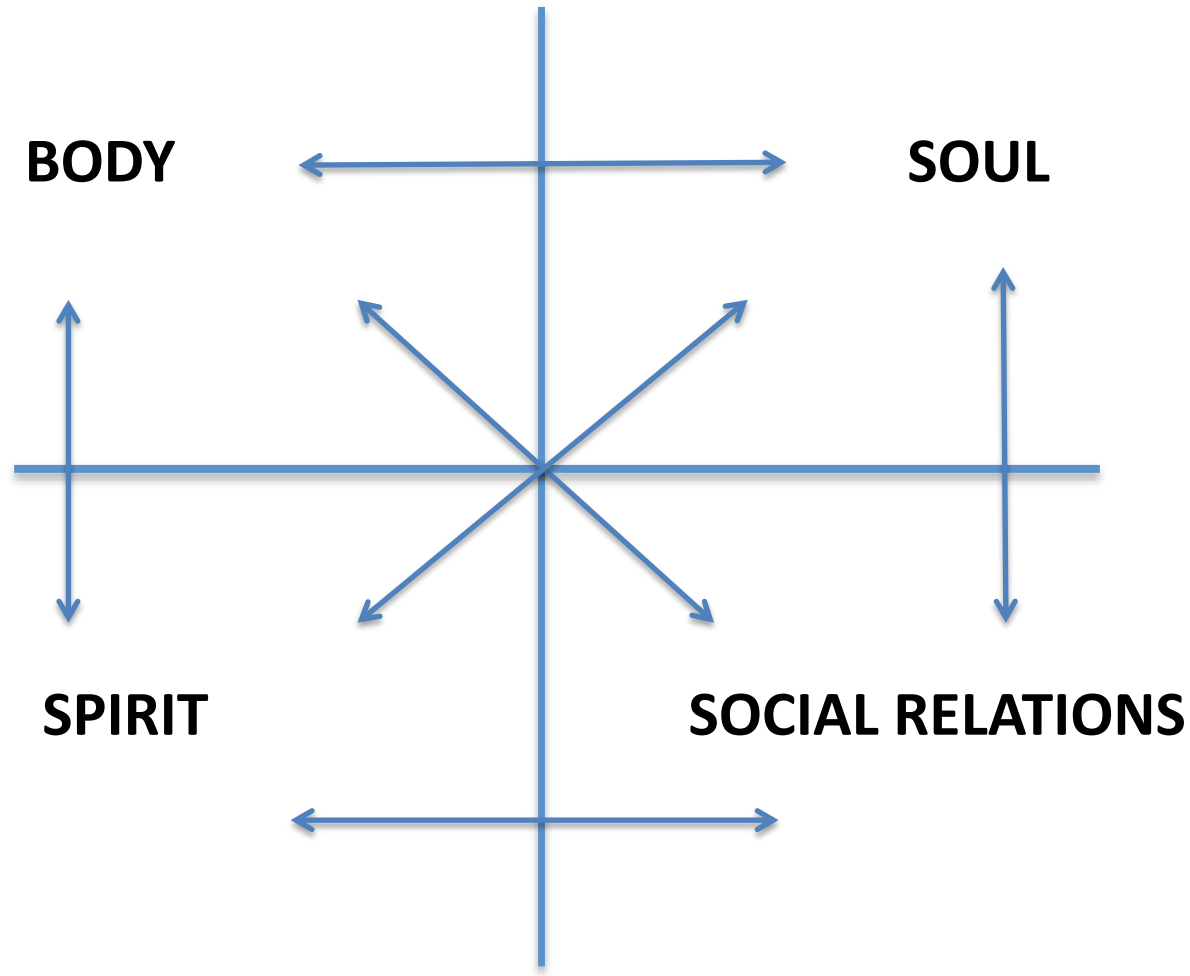


From Helping Hurting People training manual
By Dan Fountain and Sherry O'Donnel

Whole Person Perspective



Whole Person Perspective



Whole Person Perspective

BODY

Hypertension
Chronic pain or inflammation
Auto-immune disorders
Digestive Problems
Diabetes
Malignancies

SOUL

Fear, worries
Anxiety
Anger, bitterness, resentment
Shame, guilt
Jealousy, envy
Grief

SPIRIT

Poor self-image
Depression
Meaninglessness
Sense of rejection
Loneliness

SOCIAL RELATIONS

Dysfunctional relationships
Divorce
Abuse
Poverty
Unemployment

What does the literature show?

- 7,000+ articles published on religion, spirituality and health
- There is a LOT of literature about how spirituality and religion affects physical health!



Systematic Reviews

- Religion, Spirituality, and Health: The research and clinical implications, Harold Koenig MD psychiatrist at Duke University – 2012
 - **systematic review of 3,300** articles – the majority of studies show a significant relationship between religion/spirituality and **better health**
- Should Clinicians incorporate Positive Spirituality into their practices? What does the evidence say? 2002 Ann Behav Med - Walt Larimore MD and collages
 - reviewed **40 major systematic reviews** examining R/S connection – vast majority showed **benefit of intrinsic religious belief towards health outcomes**.

Most Studies Show that more spiritual involvement had:

- **Positive correlation**

- Sense of well being
- Happiness, life satisfaction
- Hope and optimism
- Higher self-esteem
- Better adaptation to bereavement
- Social support
- Marital stability

- **Negative correlation**

- Loneliness
- Rate of depression recovery
- Rates of suicide
- Anxiety
- Psychosis
- Abuse of drugs and alcohol
- Delinquency

Longer Life Expectancy

- LOTS of literature support!
- Majority of 121 studies support this!
- **Even publications that oppose spiritual care (by Sloan) acknowledge this relationship!**



Longer Life Expectancy



- 2 meta-analysis and a systematic review
- **increased religious service attendance** associated with →
- Average 37% longer life expectancy
- Equivalent benefit as using cholesterol lowering meds or doing cardiac rehab after MI

Illness Prevention

Frequent attendees more likely to:

- Stop smoking
- Start exercising
- Increase social contacts
- Stay married

- Gartner. J Psych Theology 1991;19:6-25
- Larson. J Religion Health 1989;28:265-78

Religious beliefs and practices are associated with:

- Lower suicide rates
- Less anxiety
- Less substance abuse
- Less depression and faster recovery from depression

Recovery from Surgery

Hip Surgery patients with stronger religious beliefs were associated with less post-op depression and greater walking distance at discharge.

- Pressman. Am J Psych
1990;147:758-60



Benefits for Pain?



2014 Review article:
*Spirituality: what is its
role in Pain Medicine?*

“There is increasing evidence to support the inclusion of spiritual factors as an important component in the assessment and treatment of pain.”



**KEEP
CALM
AND USE
COPING
SKILLS**

Coping with Illness

Surgery patients:

- **97% report prayer helpful in coping.**
- 96% used prayer to deal with stress.
- 70% found prayer **extremely helpful** in their coping.

— Saudia. Heart Lung 1991;20:60-65

Coping with Illness

Cancer Patients:

- **97% - religion helped sustain hope.**
- 76% - religion had a serious place.
- 49% - became more religious as result.
- **41% - religion supported self worth.**
- None became less religious.

— Roberts JA. Am J Ob Gyn 1997;176:166-172** REq

Not all spiritual beliefs are beneficial!



Not all spiritual beliefs are beneficial!

BUT...

UNDERSTANDING,
identifying, and
addressing potentially
harmful spiritual
beliefs can be very
beneficial!



Religious Struggle

A 2 year longitudinal study of hospitalized patients...

PATIENTS WHO:

- wondered whether God had abandoned them
- questioned Gods love for them
- decided the devil made this happen
- felt punished by God for their lack of devotion

→ 16%-28% higher mortality during a 2-year period following hospital discharge.

Religious Struggle

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→ 16%-28% higher mortality during a 2-year period following hospital discharge.



If you know something that
Increased the
likelihood of dying by 20%,
would you intervene ??

- Dr Walt Larimore
Grace Prescriptions
2014

PEOPLE AGREE...



Doctors think it's beneficial...

- The majority (75%) of physicians agree that religion and spirituality is important to patients for coping and for giving them a positive state of mind
- Curlin FA et al. Physicians' Observations and Interpretations of the Influence of Religion and Spirituality on Health. **Arch Intern Med.** 2007;167:649-654

Patients think it's beneficial...

- Spiritual faith can help recovery.. 79%
- A doctor should talk to patients about their spiritual beliefs..... 63%

-USA Weekend. April 5-7, 1996

Benefits to the clinician-patient relationship



The Physician's Role

To Cure Sometimes,
to Relieve often,
to Comfort Always.

Dr Edward Trudeau, founder of TB Sanatorium 1800s

The Joint Commission

- Founded in 1951, The Joint Commission seeks to continuously improve the safety and quality of care provided to the public through the provision of health care accreditation and related services that support performance improvement in health care organizations.
- The Joint Commission is the nation's oldest and largest standards-setting and accrediting body in health care.

The Joint Commission

... the spirituality of patients should be respected, assessed and attended to in ways that are important to them.

**Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.
Joint Commission Guide to Allied Health Professionals. Oakbrook Terrace, IL:
Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations; 2010.**

Joint Commission

- How does the patient keep going day after day?
- What helps the patient get through this health care experience?
- How has illness affected the patient and his / her family?
- Who or what provides the patient with strength and hope?
- How does their faith help the patient cope with illness?

Over half of U.S. Medical schools now require some training in spiritual care



American Journal of Bioethics calls it a type of “Cultural Competence”



Spiritual Care is Beneficial!

- IT IS EVIDENCED BASED ! →
 - POSITIVE SPIRITUALITY HAS BENEFITS ON HEALTH!
- MOST patients believe this
- MANY Physicians believe this*
- Med schools teach it as a type of cultural competency
- JCAHO MANDATES IT!

I am sending you out like sheep among wolves

Therefore be as shrewd as snakes



Jesus Loves You



and as innocent as doves

Matthew 10:16

Tenants of Medical Ethics

Medical
Indications

Beneficence
(benefit)

Non-
Maleficence
(do no harm)

Quality
of Life

Patient
Preference

Autonomy

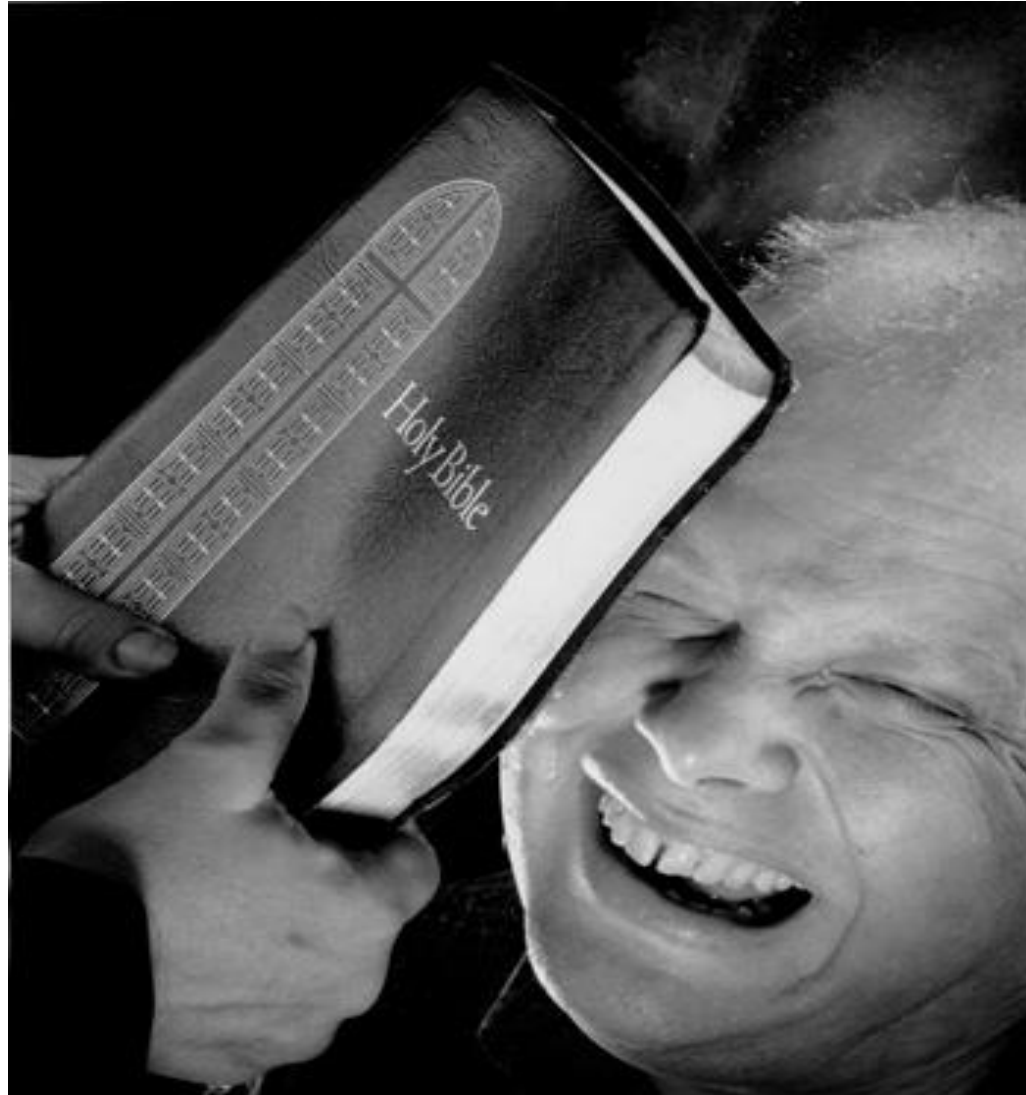
Justice

Contextual
Features

Confidentiality
Truth Telling

Professional Integrity
Informed Consent

Can Spiritual Interventions Cause Harm??



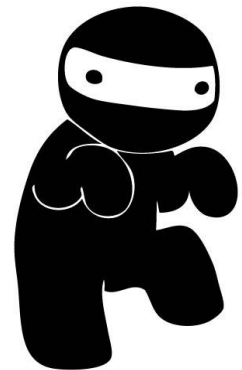
Can Spiritual Interventions Cause Harm??

“Physicians may use the new emphasis on spirituality and relating personally to patients to **inappropriately shift the focus to themselves** and their beliefs, perhaps to engage in **proselytizing**. “ Am J of Bioethics

Can Spiritual Interventions Cause Harm??



Watch out for a personal agenda...



Patient-centered approach

- No personal agenda
- Seek to understand
the patient's spiritual needs
- Sensitivity
- Respect
- What is God already doing
in this patient? Join Him
there...

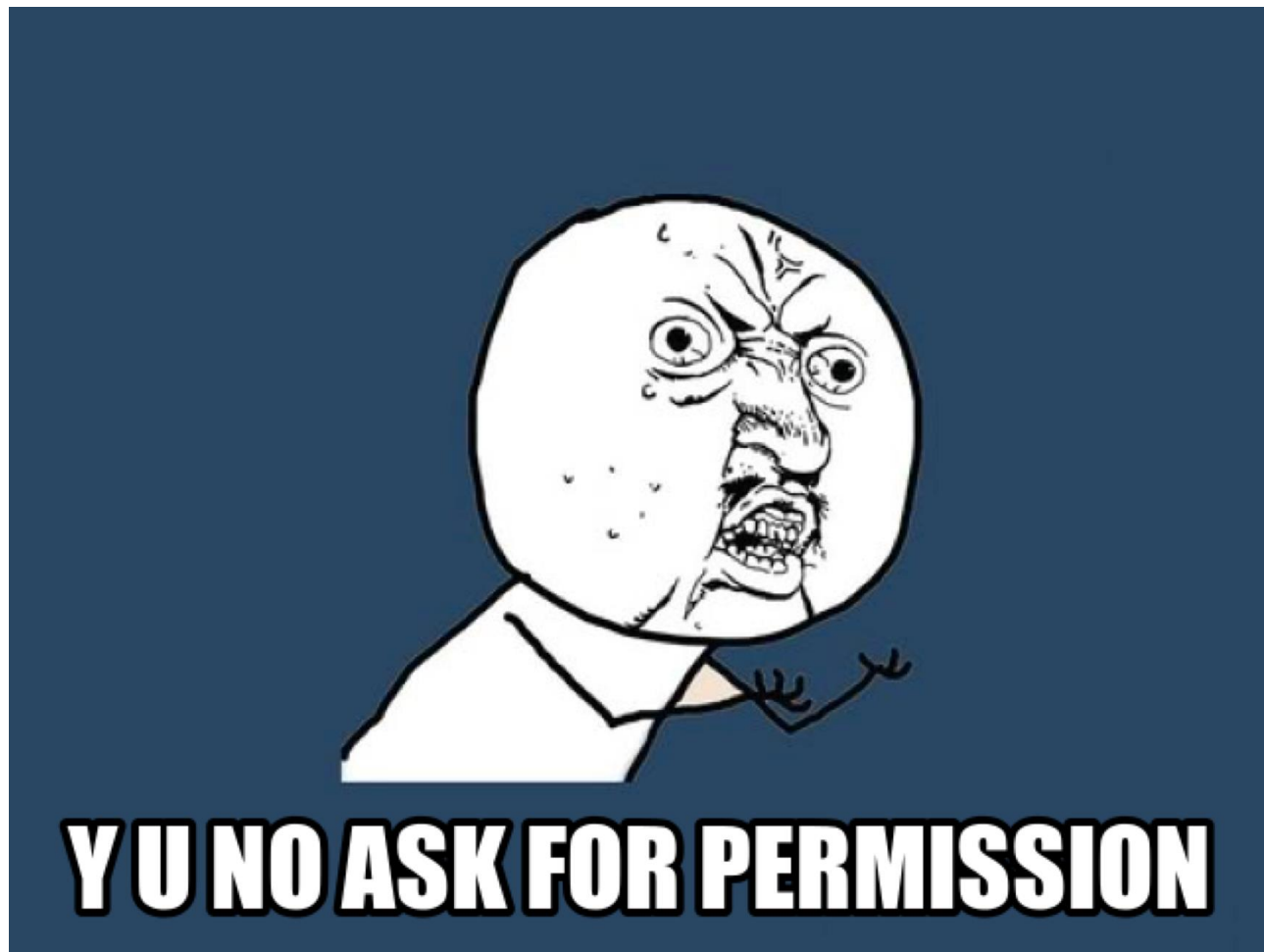


Informed Consent

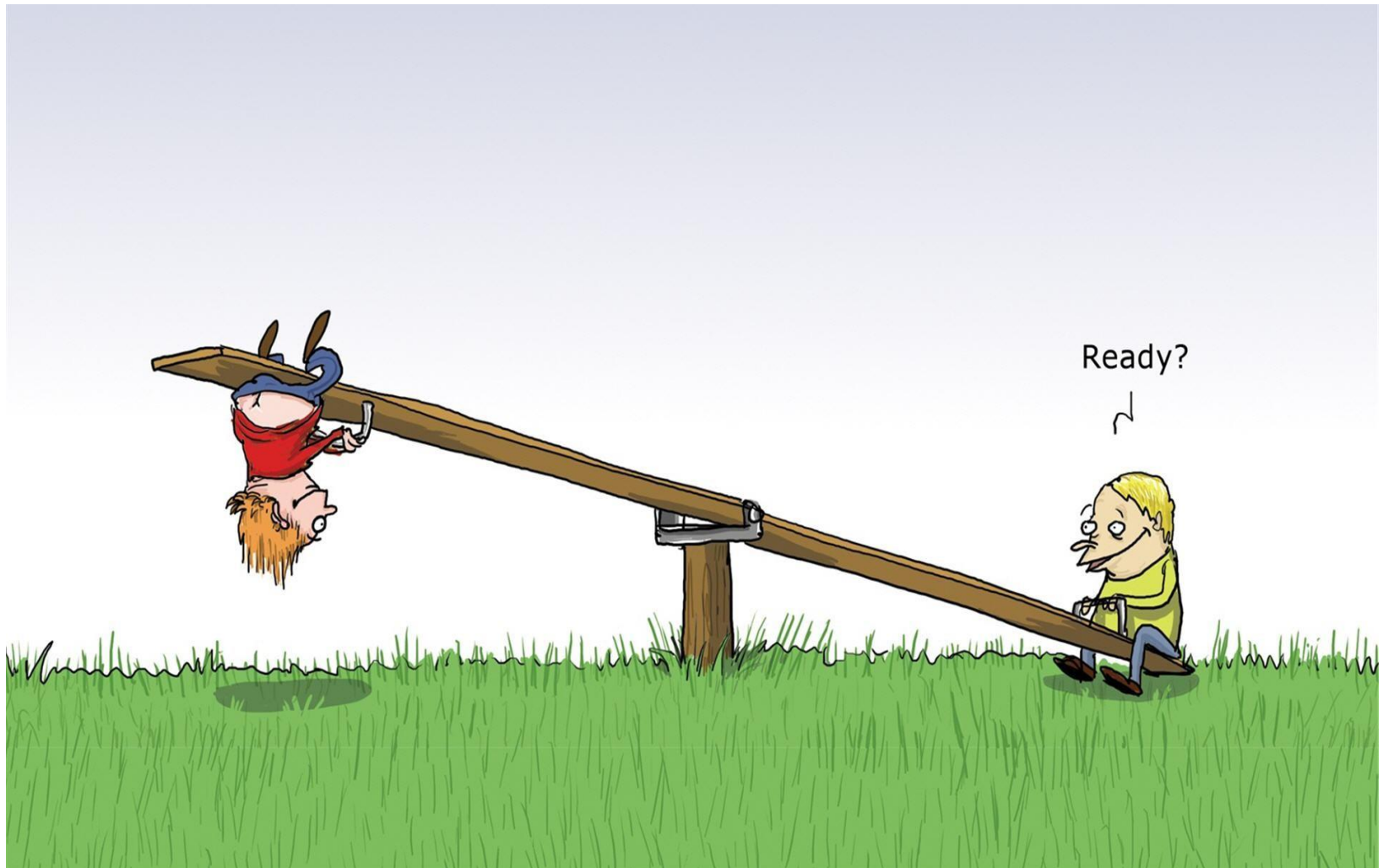
“Informed consent is the cornerstone of the contemporary physician-patient relationship”

Informed Consent

“Informed consent is the cornerstone of the contemporary physician-patient relationship”



There is potential for harm from many worthy medical interventions ...



There is potential for harm from many
worthy medical interventions ...



Whole Person Care
vs.
Penicillin

“By Respectfully
Exploring spiritual
topics with patients
who are open, we are
much **more likely to
help** than harm”

Larimore et al, **Ann Behav
medicine** 2001



But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with *gentleness and respect*. 1 Peter 3:15

Tenants of Medical Ethics

**Medical
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(benefit)**

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Patient Preference: What does the patient want?



Patient Preference

What does the patient want?

- 63% of patients felt doctors should discuss spiritual faith although only 10% said they had doctors who did.

Nationwide poll of 1000 adults
conducted in 1996
by *USA Weekend* magazine

Patient Preference

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- Between 46-78% patients **want** their physician **to pray with them** (Larimore et al, Ann Behav Med 2002 review)

Surgical Patients

83% agreed or strongly agreed that surgeons should be aware of their patients' religiosity and spirituality.

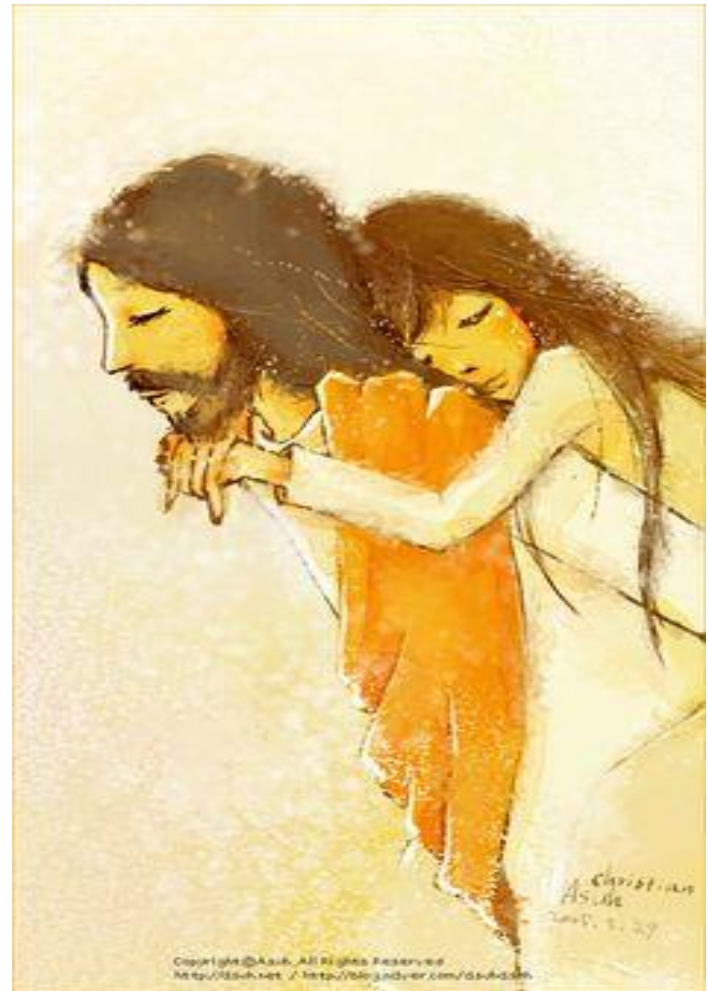
63% concurred that surgeons should take a spiritual history.

64% indicated that their TRUST in their surgeon would INCREASE if they did so.

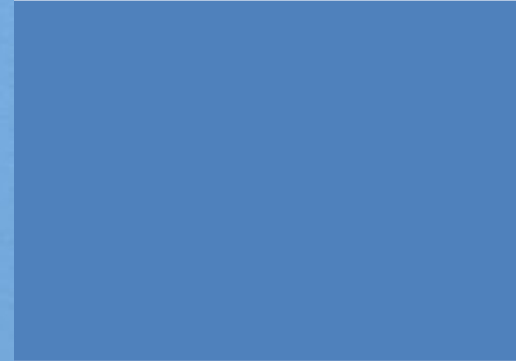
Autonomy

- Spiritual Care can empower patient autonomy*
- It can help patients...
 - See God as good, believe He is trustworthy
 - Value goodness, rightness, growth
 - Value their **self-worth**, acceptance and love
 - Chose from position of self-worth, acceptance and love*
 - chose worthy goals and valid pathways, i. e.,

Kevin



Tenants of Medical Ethics



Justice



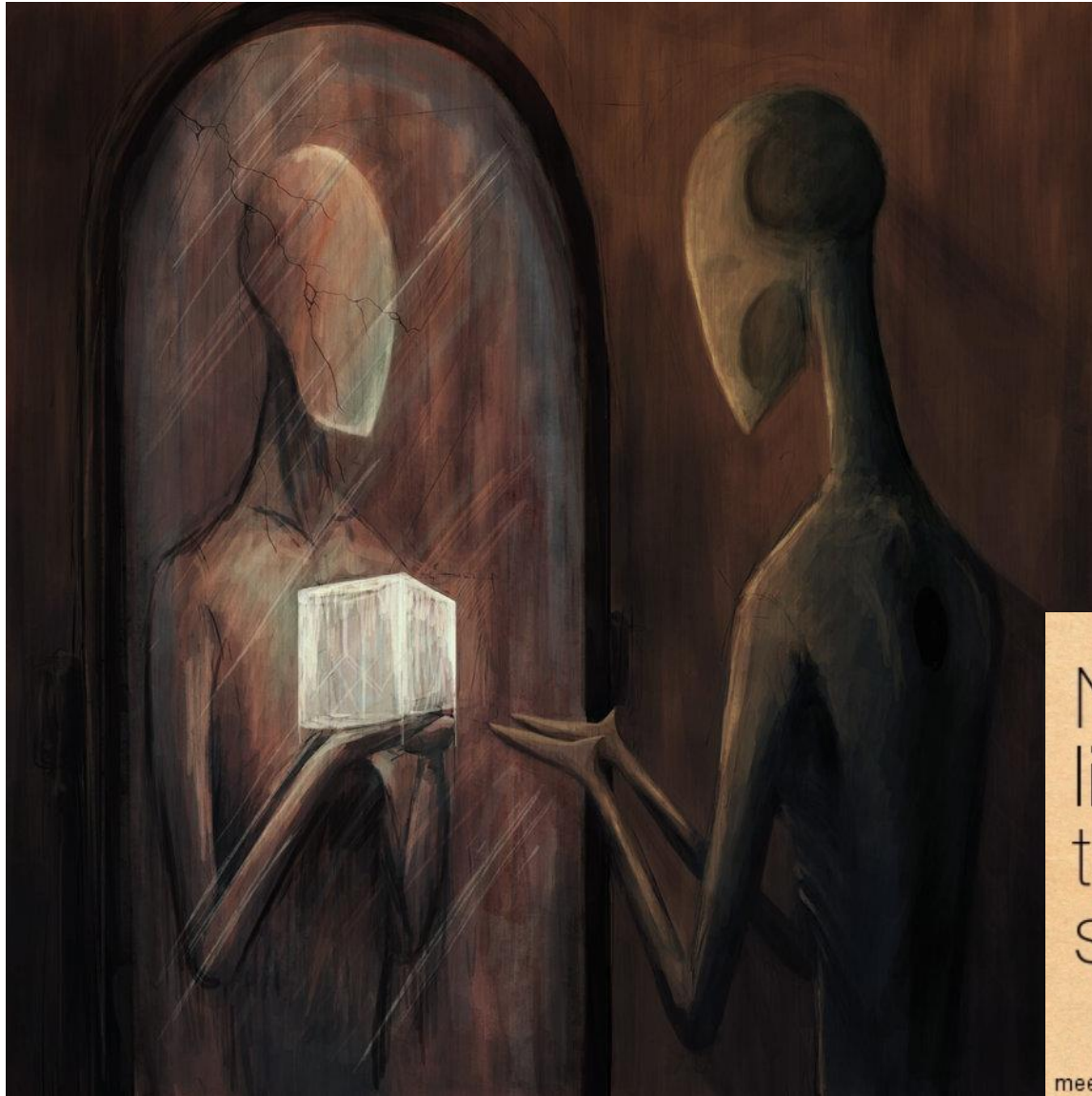
Justice

- Moral obligation to be fair and impartial, especially with regard to
 - the distribution of health resources
 - respecting an individual's rights
 - following legal laws
- If you know a better way of coping, then it should be **offered to all patients** who want it
- Christian understanding of personhood sets the highest standard for justice

A night on the pediatric ward...



Professional Integrity



Never separate the
life you live from
the words you
speak.

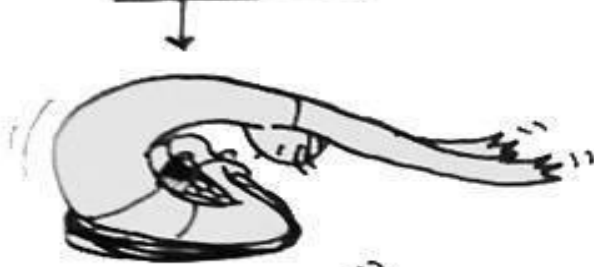
Paul Wellstone

Sarah



FIRST TIME
DOING YOGA

INSTRUCTOR



ME



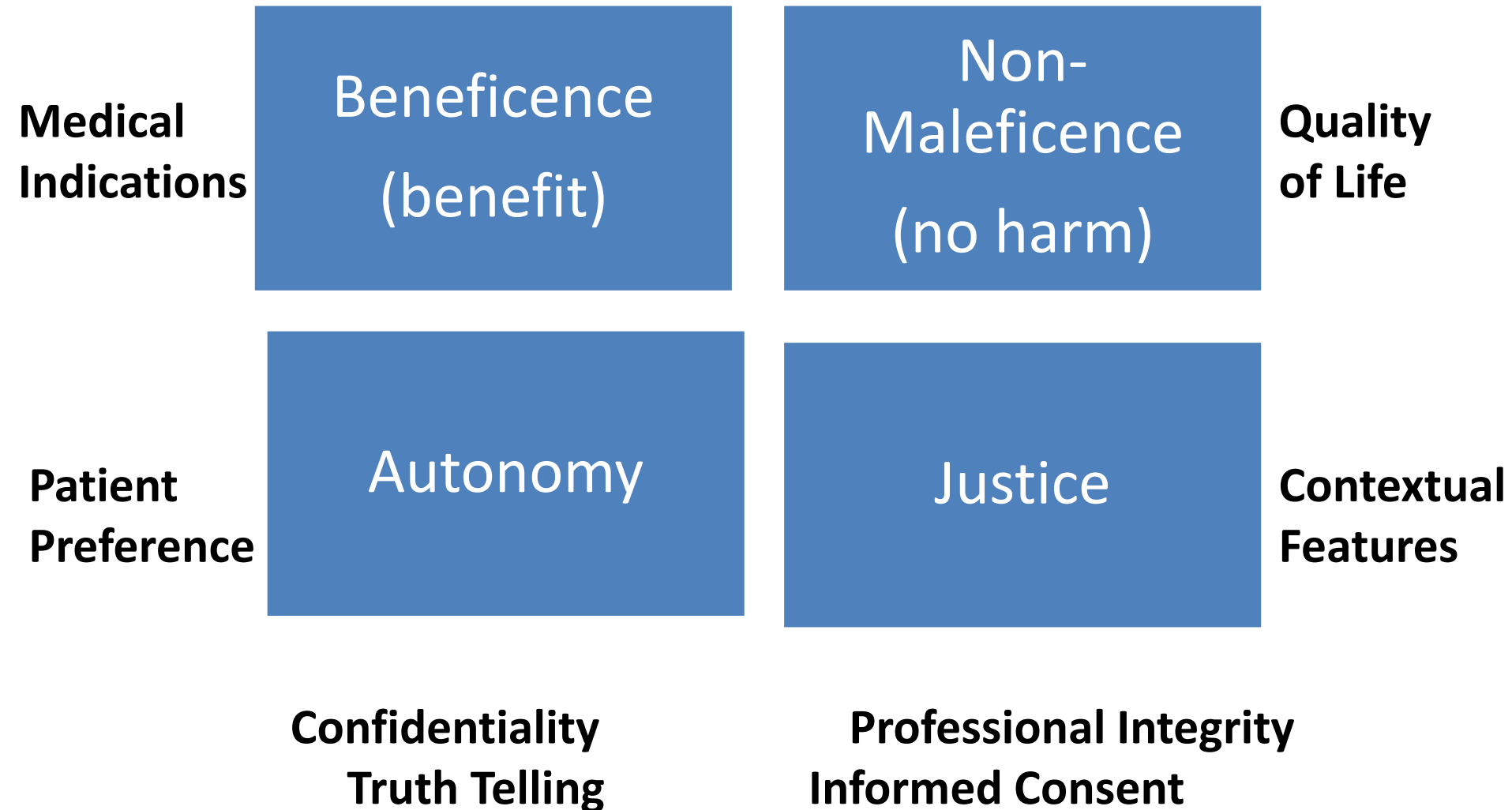
WHAT
ARE
YOU??



**Remember-
Like any skill,
It takes
practice!!**

Is Spiritual Care in Medicine ethical?

Does it “follow the rules?”





References

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- Saudia, T. Health Locus of Control and helpfulness of Prayer. Heart and Lung. Jan 1991 vol 20.
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QUESTIONS?

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Next Steps

Interest in the relationship between spirituality, religion, and clinical care has increased in the last 15 years, but clinicians need more concrete guidance about this topic.

-Chest. 2009 Jun;135(6):1634-42

**METS Whole Person Care Conferences-Boston, Houston,
Detroit, Southern California**

Pre-Med/Pre-Pro Health Student Mission

Whole Person Care Preceptorships

Whole Person Care Preceptorship Africa Combo

Student Elective Rotations



The
MEDICAL
STRATEGIC
| N E T W O R K |

Equipping • Networking • Mobilizing