



BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 2001 as the first university-chartered Institute for Spirituality and Health in the United States, GWish has sustained a leadership role in building a more compassionate system of health care, a system premised not only on concrete scientific principles but that also addresses the psychological, social and spiritual needs of patients. Illness, loss or stress can trigger profound existential questions about one's meaning and purpose. It can provoke a sense of disruption of one's life that can strike at one's deepest core. Spirituality can be seen as the way people find a sense of coherence and meaning in life and a way to experience connection to others, nature, the significant or sacred.



CHRISTINA PUCHALSKI, MD, FACP
Executive Director
Professor, Medicine and Health Science

Dr. Puchalski, a leader in the field of spirituality and health, as well as medicine and palliative care, has transformed health care through her academic, clinical and policy work. Dr. Puchalski also has a background as a research scientist at NIH thus enabling her to bridge the art and science of medicine in her work.

She is widely published in journals with publications ranging from basic research in biochemistry to issues in ethics, culture, spirituality and health care. She has authored numerous chapters in books and edited and authored a book published by Oxford University Press entitled *Time for Listening and Caring: Spirituality and the Care of the Seriously Ill and Dying* with a forward by His Holiness, The Dalai Lama. Dr. Puchalski's work in the field of spirituality and medicine encompasses the clinical, academic and pastoral application of her research and insights.



VISION

GWish envisions a health care system that recognizes spirituality as an essential element of health care and the basis of compassionate service to those who suffer.

MISSION

GWish is a university-based institute, whose mission is to educate the health care community through education, training, research and policy. Our intent is to broaden the understanding of the role of spirituality and compassion in improving the health and well-being of patients, families and health care providers.

For more information, please contact:

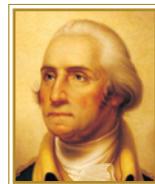
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Weaving together scientific evidence with personal experience to understand health and illness.



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Medicine is both an art and a science. We weave scientific data with the experiences of the patient and health care professional, with the way each understands illness and health, and with the worldview of each person, to create a tapestry that approximates the reality. The fabric of this tapestry is the spiritual connection we form with each other. The science is only a piece of the whole picture.

~ Christina M. Puchalski ~

(from Time for Listening and Caring, Oxford Press, 2006)

CREATING A FIELD OF SPIRITUALITY IN HEALTHCARE

GWish's pioneering programs have changed medical education and clinical care nationally, internationally and locally. We are recognized for our capacity to facilitate consensus-building among such policy-making bodies as the Association of American Medical Colleges, The Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, the American College of Physicians and the American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine. GWish is frequently asked to participate in national and international initiatives in health care to advocate for more compassionate systems of care, develop standards and provide expert leadership. In this role,

GWish has been called on by this administration to give expert advice on how to bring about more holistic and compassionate health care systems.

WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality is that part of all human beings that searches for meaning, purpose and connection to others. Spirituality is the way people find coherence and ultimate sense of who they are in relation to the world, to others, and to the significant or sacred.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Health care professionals who work out of a call to service and who attend to their own spirituality are more likely to provide compassionate care. They are less likely to experience burnout. They have greater capacity to diagnose, treat and heal, as demonstrated by recent research. Patients who have their spiritual beliefs recognized as integral to their care, and who are supported in the midst of their suffering, have an enhanced ability to understand their illness, condition or even their dying. Understanding illness in spiritual terms can enhance patient coping, health outcomes, sense of hope and health care decision making.

OUR PROGRAM AREAS

Through education, clinical innovations, research and policy initiatives, GWish educates health care professionals about the spiritual needs of patients and families, and themselves as care professionals.



- I. **Spirituality and Health Education** - GWish aims to improve delivery of patient care through curricular and competency development, research and continuing education initiatives. As a result of GWish's curricular work programs, more than 75 percent of medical schools teach courses on spirituality and health. GWish's spiritual history tool, FICA, is widely used in training programs, textbooks, nationally and internationally to help professionals communicate about spirituality with their patients.
- II. **Human Potential / Transformation** - GWish focuses on the relationship aspect of care, where health care professionals are deeply influenced and changed by their patients. GWish leads retreats for physicians and other health care professionals in support of their call to service.
- III. **Creating Compassionate Health care Communities** - GWish works with hospitals to integrate spirituality into their clinical settings to provide more compassionate health care.
- IV. **Health Promotion and Well-Being** - GWish investigates the role of mind, body and spirit on promoting healthy lifestyles and coping skills through scientific research.