Bringing the lived experience of spiritual engagement to undergraduate students through greater emphasis on personal interaction and emotional connection

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• Discuss doctoral study on the lived experience of spirituality and spiritual engagement as perceived by palliative care clients and caregivers

• Explicate of outcomes of study including the relational model that emerged from this research

• Highlight recommendations of the study pertaining to undergraduate (and ongoing professional) education
Research questions

• ‘What is the lived experience of spirituality?’

• ‘What is it like to engage in spiritual matters?’

• The study aimed to explore the lived experiences of spirituality of people with life-limiting conditions and their caregivers and how they engaged with spiritual matters.
Methodology

- Hermeneutic phenomenology

- Interview with four participants with a life-limiting condition and ten participants caring (or having cared) for loved ones with life-limiting conditions

- Descriptive and thematic analyses
• Four major themes reflecting the lived experience of spirituality emerged ‘belief in God’, ‘coping’, ‘commitment to religion’, and ‘relationships’

• Four major themes reflecting the lived experience of spiritual engagement emerged ‘relating/maintaining relationships with others’, ‘showing and receiving love’, ‘praying’, and ‘participating in other religious practices’
Subsidiary themes

- Personal significance
- Social context / situation
- Personal transformation
- Personal interaction
- Culture and religion
Relational model of spiritual engagement
Finding/Implication

- Study participants placed high importance on spiritual matters and felt the need for greater responsiveness to their spiritual needs.

- Implication of this finding relates to clinical practice and education of nurses and other health professionals working in palliative care and future research directions.
• Diverse notions of spirituality that goes beyond religious beliefs

• More than calling a chaplain, pastor, or priest

• Positive and negative aspects of spirituality

• Clarification of role
Heighten sensitivity & discernment of spiritual concerns

- Developing sensitivity and identifying what is most important for clients and caregivers
- Exploring client’s spiritual beliefs and practices
- Inviting clients to a conversation
- Including spiritual measurement or assessment
Environments that value relationships

- Connecting with the person’s story
- Product of social interaction
- Maintaining personal relationships and religious practices
- Safe and supportive environments conducive to relationships, even amongst strangers, to address individual spiritual needs
- Displaying caring behaviours
Facilitate spiritual engagement

- Being open to life’s meanings, suffering, healing, and expressions of love and hope
- Assisting in clarifying meaning of spirituality
- Encouraging articulation and expression (time, place, space, activities)
- Involving family
Self understanding of spirituality

• To engage in spiritual matters, a person should be spiritual

• Need to reflect thoughtfully about personal beliefs

• Cultivate own emotional and spiritual development

• Get in touch with core values, making these explicit, and suspending them
Concluding reflections

- Spiritual engagement is universal - relates to notions of nurturing human relationships and love.

- Is useful concept in uniting spiritual care that may be required by palliative care clients/caregivers in the end-stage of life.

- Nurses and other professionals are encouraged to consider spirituality in their practice to positively enhance the client's and caregiver’s experience.