

## The medical relevance of the spiritual dimension during the pre-surgical period

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### Background

- Some patients experience the day of surgery as «most threatening day of their life» Nigussi S et al (2014)<sup>(1)</sup>: Significant preoperative anxiety was seen in 70.3% of patients. Fumasoli et al (2012)<sup>(2)</sup>: Indication for surgery is experienced as «critical life-situation»
- Spirituality and religion (S/R) play an important role in medicine, particularly in times of crisis Puchalski C<sup>(3)</sup>: A spiritual issue becomes a diagnosis if it leads to distress or suffering, it is the cause of psychological or physical diagnosis or it is a secondary cause or affects the presenting psychological or physical diagnosis.
- There is hardly any information and very few studies about the spiritual dimension of the pre-surgical period (pp). Beiranvand S et al (2014)<sup>(4)</sup>: The study shows that spiritual elements play an important role in the recovery process with regard to acute postoperative pain. Prayer meditation tapes helped. Hosseini M et al (2013)<sup>(5)</sup>: The study demonstrates that preoperative spiritual/religious training can reduce anxiety in Muslim patients undergoing coronary artery bypass graft surgery.
- WHO Concept of Health includes Spirituality as fourth dimension<sup>(6)</sup>



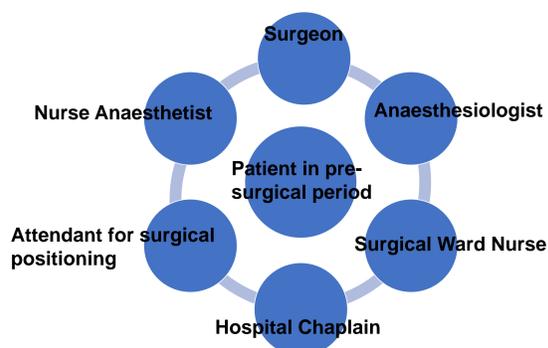
### Study Purpose

Finding more information about the medical relevance of S/R during the pp

### Methods

Design: Qualitative study  
Thematic analysis of 6 semi-structured interviews with healthcare professionals, who work with patients during pp.

Sample:



Data collection: Spring 2016 in 3 hospitals in Berne area

Tool used to identify medically relevant spiritual issues: Adapted List of Spiritual Concerns or Diagnoses, which identifies 12 diagnoses.<sup>(7)</sup>  
Examples

Diagnoses	Key feature from history	Example statements
Existential concerns	Lack of meaning Concern about afterlife Questions the meaning of suffering	'My life is meaningless' 'I feel useless'
Despair/ Hopelessness	Hopelessness about future health, life No hope for value of life	'There is nothing left for me to live for'
Grief/Loss	The feeling and process associated with the loss of a person, health, relationship, work	'I miss my family' 'I wish I could run again' 'I might lose my income'
Guilt/Shame	Feeling that one has done something wrong or evil Feeling that illness is God's punishment	'I do not deserve to be pain free' 'It is all my fault'

### Findings

## 6 Healthcare Professionals unanimously agree: Spirituality/Religion is relevant during pre-surgical period

All 12 spiritual diagnoses of the 'spiritual concerns or diagnoses list' were identified as relevant during the pp.



Patients have general need related to S/R  
Attendant for surgical positioning: «I remember a patient who did not allow us to cut her hair until we promised to keep the hair and to hand it back to her after surgery.»



S/R can help with dealing of stress (positive coping):  
Anaesthetist nurse: «People who trust in God or a 'Higher Power' are much easier to handle and anaesthetize.»



S/R can hinder coping (negative coping)  
Surgeon: «There are patients who refuse surgery, because they believe that God will heal them.»



Fears during pp may have spiritual dimension:  
Anaesthetist doctor: «Some people think for the first time about the limitedness of their life before surgery.»

### Conclusion

This study illustrates the important influence S/R can have during the pp. This influence has hardly been considered until now. The findings are supported by current literature.

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