

This bimonthly newsletter, produced by Pastoral Care Services/Office of Diversity & Inclusion will highlight some of the spiritual and religious beliefs held by patients and their families, providers and others in the MUSC community. It will offer strategies for staff self-care as well information to better address the spiritual needs of the diverse patients and families that we serve.

Interfaith Calendar

Highlights

- August 14. **Tisha B'av** (Jewish). Day of fasting to remember the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE and 70 CE.
- August 15. **Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary** (Catholic Christian). Observance of the belief that Blessed Virgin Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven.
- August 18. **Raksha Bandhan** (Hindu). Festival honoring the loving ties between siblings.
- September 6-15. **Paryushana Parava** (Jain). Festival signifying human emergence into a new world of spiritual and moral refinement, culminating in forgiveness.
- September 10/11-14. **Hajj Day/Eid al Adha** (Islam). Pilgrimage rites in Mecca./ Remembrance of Abraham's obedience to Allah.

Source: <http://www.interfaithcalendar.org>

Spirituality Spotlight: Jehovah's Witnesses

by Chaplain Terry Wilson

Certain aspects of the Jehovah's Witness faith may create challenges for some physicians caring for patients of this faith. One example of this is when principles of autonomy versus the welfare of the patient come into conflict. This occurs when a physician believes a transfusion is in the best interest of the patient but the patient refuses, based on religious principle. Devout patients of Jehovah's Witness faith are not allowed to receive blood transfusions even in life and death situations.

Patients of the Jehovah's Witness faith can refuse a blood transfusion or any blood product at any time. If an adult patient refuses a blood transfusion he or she will not receive blood even if the expected medical outcome will most likely result in death. If the patient's medical condition changes the patient is to be informed of the change and his or her decision followed. The medical team's responsibility is to assure the patient is not being coerced and to confirm that their decision not to receive blood or blood products is truly the patient's choice.

MUSC Health provides care to an increasing number of patients of the Jehovah's Witness faith. An excerpt from *The Journal of the American Medi-*

cal Association (JAMA) entitled: *The Surgical/Ethical Challenge*, notes that members of this faith have deep religious convictions against accepting homologous or autologous whole blood, packed red blood cells, white blood cells or platelets. Patients of Jehovah's Witness faith are encouraged to sign the American Medical Association's form relieving physicians and hospitals of liability and to carry dated, witnessed Medical Alert cards that have been prepared in consultation with medical and legal authorities.

The MUSC Ethics Committee works with the local Jehovah's Witness liaison group for feedback and clarity around their religious practices and in the development of our organizational policies pertaining to the needs of patients of the faith. Every effort is made to honor the patient's autonomy. Ethics consultations with providers, patients and family members should always be an intricate component of family discussions.

Many providers are unfamiliar with some facets of the Jehovah's Witness faith. Additional information appears on page 2.



Health Care Theater

Health Care Theater is a monthly program that provides a forum for MUSC Health care team members to debrief difficult cases and to share strategies that support patients, families, and colleagues. Program participants may be called upon to play an impromptu role in these case studies.

This month's program "Religious/Cultural 'Zebras' and Stereotypes" raises awareness around the importance of having a good understanding of the values, behaviors and expectations of other cultures so that we are less likely to respond to patients and

families in ways that may be considered disrespectful.

This program will focus on practices that we may rarely see or that may be unfamiliar to us in Western culture. Everyone is invited to attend this event with an open mind and heart so we can all learn together.

One hour of Diversity Education will be provided and registration via MyQuest is required. Program details are as follows:

September 13th 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm
300 - CSB (Clinical Science Building)
"Religious/Cultural 'Zebras' and Stereotypes"



**Chaplains
are
available
24/7/365**

Helpful Hints: Jehovah's Witness

To help you care for patients of Jehovah's Witness faith, please review the following information:

- Most medical treatments do not conflict with the interpretation of Bible principles in the Jehovah's Witness faith therefore, personal choice is involved. One patient of Jehovah's Witness faith might decide to accept a particular medicine or treatment, while another might reject that same treatment.
- Organ donation and transplantation is allowed. Patients are guided by their consciences
- Jehovah's Witnesses are usually well prepared to work with healthcare providers to seek all possible options for treatment that do not conflict with religious concerns. It is common for adults to carry a card stating religion-based directives for treatment without blood.
- Contrary to some misconceptions, faith-healing is not a part of the Jehovah's Witness tradition. Prayers are often said for comfort and endurance.
- Traditions of the Jehovah's Witness faith does not teach that those who die experience an immediate afterlife. It would be inappropriate to say to the family of a deceased patient, "He's in a better place now."
- Jehovah's Witnesses do not celebrate birthdays or Christian holidays.

MUSC chaplains are available to support the health care team and to provide spiritual support to patients of all faiths. Providers are encouraged to review and adhere to MUSC Clinical Policy C-165 - Blood Conservation.

What Does a Chaplain Do?

MUSC Pastoral Care Services is committed to providing care that respects the religious and spiritual values of all patients, family members, and staff. Our spiritual support services include:

- Comfort during experiences of pain, suffering and loss, or change of health status.
- Support to help families as they cope with hospitalization and difficult diagnosis and treatment.
- Coordination of support alter-

- natives for patients of all faiths.
- Guidance in decision-making related to treatment options, transition concerns and end-of-life choices.
- Assistance with advance directives (i.e. health care power of attorney).
- Notary Public services.

In addition to these support services, chaplains also provide and facilitate:

- Seasonal worship services.

FACT OR FICTION

MUSC policy on Blood Conservation states that a patient has the right to reverse his/her decision and request a blood transfusion at any time.

True or False

The first team member to respond with the correct answer will be recognized in a future edition of the newsletter. Send responses to sergents@muscd.edu



Do you have ideas for future issues or would like to provide general feedback about the newsletter? If so, send an email to:

**Chaplain Stacy Sergent
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Compliments, complaints or other acknowledgements about Pastoral Care Services should be directed to:

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- Memorial services.
- Grief and support services.
- Anatomical Gift Service (MUSC body donation program).
- Religious ministry including prayers, blessings, baptisms, communion, and other religious rituals and sacraments.

Chaplains are available and on-call in the hospital 24/7/365. They collaborate with a range of religious institutions to identify appropriate clergy to match patient requests.