

CROSSROADS...

exploring the intersection of health, spirituality and faith

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIETY FOR SPIRITUALITY, THEOLOGY & HEALTH

VOLUME 2

ISSUE 1

MARCH/APRIL 2009

1ST ANNUAL MEETING

“Spirituality, Health and Human Flourishing: Meaning? Measurement? Implications?”

The Duke Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health, hosted the 1st Annual Meeting of the Society for Spirituality, Theology & Health at the R. David Thomas Executive Conference Center and Duke Fuqua School of Business June 25-27, 2008. Dr. Harvey Cohen, Director of the Center for Aging and Human Development and Chair of the Department of Medicine at Duke, and Drs. Keith Meador and Harold Koenig, Co-Directors of the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health at Duke welcomed participants to Duke and to this historic occasion. Dr. John M. Templeton, Jr., Chairman of The John Templeton Foundation opened the conference with a brief history of the field of religion and health. The keynote address and four plenary sessions as well as presentations from conference participants centered on the theme of the conference: “Spirituality, Health and Human Flourishing: Meaning? Measurement? Implications?”

Dr. William Roper, MD, MPH, Chief Executive Officer of the UNC Health Care System and Dean of the School of Medicine was the keynote speaker. In speaking of his personal career in healthcare, including his experience as Director of the Centers for Disease Control, Dr. Roper stated, “It would be arbitrary and even foolish to try to exclude spirituality and religion from our efforts to understand human health and well-being.”

Plenary speakers were Kenneth I. Pargament, PhD, who considered how spiritual struggles might lead to growth or decline in physical and mental well-being; Ellen L. Idler, PhD, who explained how religion and health research relate communities of communities and societies; John Swinton, PhD, who encouraged researchers to think theologically and to invite theologians to be part of the research team; and Jeff Levin, PhD, MPH, who provided an epidemiologist’s perspective on the concept of human flourishing and its relationship to health.

In addition to these speakers, there were 36 paper presentations and 68 poster presentations, topics included challenges in measurement of religion and spirituality, faith communities of all ages and health disparities, and theological considerations in diverse religious traditions of health and human flourishing. Video presentations and speaker notes are available to Society Members at <http://societysth.org/index.php/2008-meeting>. The 255 attendees for the conference came from Australia, Brazil, Chile, Greece, Israel, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

The 2nd Annual Meeting of the Society for Spirituality, Theology and Health entitled “Lifecourse Perspectives on Spirituality and Health in Diverse Religious Communities” will be June 3-5, 2009 at the Washington Duke Inn and Golf Club. This meeting will focus on the intersections of spirituality and health throughout the life cycle within various cultures. Information about the 2009 conference can be found at <http://societysth.org>.

EXPLORE...IN THIS ISSUE

2. Insight latest research

4. Funding Opportunities

3. STH Seminar Update

4. Calendar of events

INSIGHT...latest research SSTH POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWS



R. David Hayward, PhD

Summary: Dr. Hayward's primary areas of research interest include the role of social psychological processes mediating the effects of religion on well-being, the impact of religious history on the development of cultural values, and the cognitive construction of existential meaning

systems. As a social psychologist, Dr. Hayward is pursuing research to bridge the gap between mainstream social psychology and the study of religion and health. He is working on two projects that aim to help integrate these fields, with a focus on group dynamics and social cognition.

One project examines individual fit in a religious community as a predictor of recovery speed following surgery. This project is designed to expand findings from Dr. Hayward's previous community-based field research to a clinical population. Religious experience is a fundamentally social experience, relying on interaction with a community of fellow believers to communicate and reinforce beliefs and practices. Yet the impact of individual-group interaction on the outcomes of religious belonging, including mental and physical health, has been neglected. This study examines subjective prototypicality within a religious group, the extent to which people feel that they fit in with the particular standards and values of their own congregations, as a factor predicting recovery from orthopedic surgery. Participants will be surveyed regarding a number of dimensions of their religious identity before joint replacement surgery, and then contacted again six weeks following their surgery. It is predicted that people who feel that they fit in with their group's norms will not only report better psychological well-being overall, as has been found in Dr. Hayward's previous research, but will also experience better social support and quicker recovery from surgery. Data collection is currently underway at Alamance Regional Medical Center.

The second project will examine the role of religion in the cognitive evolution of human social groups. This conceptual project's aim is to outline the evolutionary connections between religion and some of the basic cognitive processes that enable our species to form and maintain complex social groups. Fundamental elements of group life include the ability to form social identities that subsume the self within a superordinate group, as well as the ability to construe the self in such a way that others' well-being is implicated in one's own well-being. It can be argued that the contours of the religious communities are shaped by these cognitive facts, and that religious groups in turn help to regulate and direct their members' perceptions and actions. Examining these relationships may help to articulate how religious groups are similar in function to secular groups, and how their effects may be unique.



Suk-Sun Kim, PhD, MSN

"Family Spirituality from the Perspective of Korean American Elders and Family Caregivers"

Summary: Suk-Sun Kim, Ph.D., is a post doctoral fellow with the Center for Spirituality, Theology, and Health under the mentorship of Dr. Koenig and Dr. Meador, in September 2008.

Her major research interests included: family religion/spirituality and health; meaning and expressions of family spirituality; the health effects of family spirituality; family support and coping of elders' family caregiving in the context of Korean family culture.

She explored "Family Interdependence of Spirituality and Well-Being among Korean Elders and Family Caregivers" to examine spirituality in the context of Korean families in her doctoral dissertation at the College of Nursing, University of Arizona. It tested Kim's (2006) Family Spiritual Interdependence Model and examined the congruence of spirituality and well-being and the family spiritual interdependence, the extent to which family members' spirituality influence their own and others' well-being among, 157 Korean elders-caregivers dyads.

Dr. Kim is currently conducting research, "Family Spirituality from the Perspective of Korean American Elders and Family Caregivers" to explore the meaning of family spirituality and the health effects of family spirituality in family relationships of immigrant Korean American elders in NC. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used in this study. Qualitatively, this study will investigate three specific research questions: 1) What is the meaning of family spirituality, 2) What are the ways family members express spirituality in family relationships and 3) What are the health effects of family spirituality. Quantitatively, it will test and revise Kim's (2006) Family Spiritual Interdependence Theory based on five research questions; a) Is there a significant congruence of spirituality between elders and their family caregivers, b) Is there a significant congruence of health between elders and their family caregivers, c) Are there significant actor effects (meaning that an elder's spirituality would predict their own health, and the caregiver's spirituality would predict their own health), d) Are there significant partner effects (meaning that the caregiver's spirituality would predict the health of the elder, and the elder's spirituality would predict the health of the caregiver), e) Is there a significant mediating relationship of family support between spirituality and health.

SPIRITUALITY, THEOLOGY & HEALTH SEMINAR



Pamela G. Reed, PhD, RN,
FAAN
Professor of Nursing
University of Arizona

Spiritual Perspectives and Health Science
Abstract of September 2008 Seminar

Spirituality is an area of scientific study and practice that involves awareness of our connectedness to unseen dimensions, to purposes greater than the self, and to sources of meaning that sustain us. Spirituality is often found at the intersection of science and significant human experiences: Spirituality – it's there, 422 million miles from Earth, where scientists and engineers guided the Phoenix Lander in a search for evidence of life on Mars. It's there, 300 feet below the Swiss-French border, where researchers steer protons around a 17 mile track to recreate conditions that existed at the beginning of time. It's there, in a space station orbiting Earth, where an astro-tourist spent millions to ponder Ultimate Reality. And it is here, among persons facing end of life and their family caregivers, whose anticipated losses propel them into what researchers identified as spiritual inquiry; where the supernatural is natural and individuals do not seek final answers but instead engage in ongoing Socratic inquiry about the mysteries of life (Reed & Rousseau, 2006).

Historically, scientific thought and spirituality were connected. Early on, science was influenced in part by the logic of religious thinking. Then, during the Renaissance, scientists moved away from spiritual considerations and embraced a systematic and mechanistic approach of modern science that generated many great discoveries. During the late 20th century and into the 21st century, spirituality re-entered the practice of science.

Spirituality informs health science. For example, understanding human development and aging depends in part on knowledge about self-transcendent perspectives that accompany aging and help make it a time of innovative change for individuals. A healthy stance in aging is one that is open to the spiritual, to mystery and seeking truthfulness (not Truth) in relating to others (The Religious Case Against Belief, Carse, 2008; Tao Te Ching, Tzu, 1988). The spiritual perspective involves self-transcendence – that is, expanding boundaries inward (to attain a sense of one's beliefs and values); outward (to connect with others and with nature); upward (to connect with one's God or higher source); and temporally (to connect past and future into a fuller present). Reed's (1995, 2003, 2008) theory of self-transcendence proposes that in times of increased vulnerability, people possess the inner capacity for self-transcendence, which has been found to facilitate healing and sense of well-being across a variety of health experiences. Spirituality also informs health care practice. For example, with "inspired knowing", health care providers and patients honor each others' wisdom and produce knowledge together to promote the healing process.

The quest for knowledge in the health sciences best involves both the spiritual and scientific dimensions of knowledge. The pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty suggested that we should balance analysis with inspiration, professionalism with enthusiasm, knowledge with self-transformation, and understanding with hope. This spiritual approach to health care not only sustains health care providers and patients alike, but may make us feel about our work as described by a Mars Lander scientist, like we're walking on moonbeams.

The Society thanks Dr. Reed for submitting this abstract for publication.

Each month we have a university-wide luncheon seminar on a topic in spirituality, theology and health. Information about past seminars conference and can be found at <http://www.spiritualityandhealth.duke.edu> as well in the member area of <http://societysth.org>

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES...

The Center for Religion and Civic Culture at the University of Southern California is pleased to announce the Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Initiative (PCRI). PCRI, which is made possible by a grant from the John Templeton Foundation, is intended to provide scholarly framework to investigate Pentecostalism and the various renewal movements that have emerged in Roman Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, and mainline Protestantism. The initiative will award up to seven grants to regional centers (up to \$500,000 over two years) and fifteen grants to individual scholars or small research teams (up to \$100,000 over two years) to support social science research on Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the former Soviet Union. Interested parties must submit letters of intent by August 1, 2009. To learn about the initiative and to download the RFP, please visit <http://www.usc.edu/pcri>

Exploratory/Developmental Clinical Research Grants in Obesity (R21)

National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), National Cancer Institute (NCI), and Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) are soliciting research applications to encourage exploratory/developmental clinical studies that will accelerate the development of effective interventions for prevention or treatment of overweight or obesity in either adults or children. Exploratory epidemiological research with a goal of informing translational/clinical research will also be supported within this program. Expiration Date: May 8, 2009 (last date an application may be submitted to Grants.gov). More Information: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-06-256.html>

Contextual Approaches to Prevention of Unintended Pregnancy (R01)

National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) are soliciting applications to strengthen and revitalize scientific research on the prevention of unintended pregnancies in the United States. The Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch (DBSB) of the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) invites R01 research grant applications that will lay the groundwork for achieving scientifically-informed interventions that produce a change in pregnancy planning, similar to what has emerged for tobacco control. These interventions can operate at a wide range of levels, from clinical interventions to interventions that influence cultural, economic, social, structural, and/or policy factors contributing to unintended pregnancy. Opening Date: January 5, 2009 (earliest date an application may be submitted to Grants.gov). More Information: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-09-014.html>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS...

May 2009

7 Spirituality, Theology and Health Seminar.*
Speaker: Michael King, PhD; Professor
of Primary Care Psychiatry; University
College London

June 2009

3-5 Society for Spirituality, Theology & Health
2nd Annual Meeting
Washington Duke Inn and Golf Club

July 2009

20-24 Summer Research Workshop w/ Dr. Harold
Koenig

Seminars: Lunch is provided, registration requested.
To register contact: elizabeth.alford@duke.edu

All events are held in Durham, North Carolina unless
otherwise noted



Published by the Society for Spirituality, Theology &
Health, Durham, North Carolina

Society for Spirituality, Theology & Health
DUMC Box 3825, Durham, NC 27710

<http://societysth.org>

© 2009 A publication of the Society for Spirituality, Theology & Health. May be reproduced for noncommercial purposes.