

## Evidence-based Spiritual Care Best Practices

John J. Gleason, DMin, BCC, AAPC  
Pastoral Educator  
St. Vincent Hospital

In keeping with the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health theme of *spirituality and practices of caring*, the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. (ACPE) joins several of its Spiritual Care Collaborative partners in their timely efforts to identify and implement best practices. The *Evidence-based Spiritual Care Best Practices* project employs an inductive approach to gather evidence toward establishing and validating best practice categories from the actual exercise of such caregiving.

Five steps comprise the design. First, an innovative paper consolidates learnings gained from the traditional CPE peer group presentation of a verbatim record of pastoral care. Second, the paper is submitted to a planned interactive database inductively organized by central issues, such as “preparing to die.” Third, certified spiritual care clinicians access the database category pertaining to a current need and allow the paper(s) to inform their interventions. Fourth, these clinicians ask the recipients of that care to rate their interventions’ effectiveness in a brief questionnaire. Effective interventions will be designated as *tentative* best practices. Fifth, other qualified clinicians will replicate those interventions, validating them as evidence-based spiritual care best practices when recipients also deem replications effective.

The innovative paper, currently identified as the Ideal Intervention Paper (IIP), was piloted with three intern groups and one resident group in the East Central ACPE Region in 2006-2007. Based on intern, resident and supervisor critiques, a revised IIP protocol is being tested by ACPE supervisors in a second pilot phase.