

PATIENTS' EXPECTATIONS OF HOSPITAL CHAPLAINS *

Katherine M. Piderman, Ph.D.^{1,2}

Rev. Dean V. Marek, B.A.¹

Sarah M. Jenkins, M.S.³

Mary E. Johnson, M.A.^{1,4}

Rev. James F. Buryska, S.T.L.¹

Paul S. Mueller, M.D.⁵

¹ Mayo Clinic Department of Chaplain Services

² Mayo Clinic Department of Psychiatry and Psychology, Assistant Professor

³ Mayo Clinic Department of Health Sciences Research, Division of Biostatistics

⁴ Mayo Clinic Department of Oncology, Assistant Professor

⁵ Mayo Clinic Department of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine, Associate Professor

Corresponding Author: Katherine M. Piderman, Ph.D.

Mayo Clinic Department of Chaplain Services

EI-2-130, 200 First St. SW, Rochester, MN 55905

piderman.katherine@mayo.edu, (507) 266-7275, FAX (507) 266-7882

*Adapted from Piderman KM, Marek DV, Jenkins SM, Johnson ME, Buryska JF, Mueller PS. Patients' Expectations of Hospital Chaplains. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2008;83:58-65. Used with permission.)

Objective: To investigate patients' expectations of hospital chaplains.

Design: Survey project.

Subjects: 1500 medical and surgical hospitalized patients.

Setting: A midwestern academic, referral inpatient tertiary care center.

Methods: Three weeks after discharge from hospital, eligible patients were surveyed by mail. Questions were related to demographics, length of stay, awareness of chaplain availability, expectations regarding chaplain visits, and reasons for wanting to see a chaplain. Measured characteristics were summarized by calculating means and standard deviations for continuous variables and proportions for categorical variables. Proportions were statistically compared via Fisher's exact tests or Monte Carlo estimates.

Results: 535 patients returned surveys. The majority were male, married, 56 years or older, affiliated with Lutheran or Catholic churches, and hospitalized for less than one week. Most were aware of chaplain availability, and would have appreciated chaplain visitation at least every few days. Over half reported being visited, and most reported this visit as important. The primary reason selected for wanting to see a chaplain was "to be reminded of God's care and presence." Items related to ritual, prayer, and pastoral support were also highly endorsed. Some results were dependent on sex, age, religious affiliation, or length of stay. Handwritten comments supported quantitative data.

Conclusion: Hospitalized patients value visitation by chaplains. They look to chaplains to remind them of God's care and presence and to provide both religious and supportive interventions.