

## section 2.1.1: the role of the multidisciplinary team

### 8. Pastoral care

Pastoral care is a person-centred, holistic approach to care that complements the care offered by other helping disciplines while paying particular attention to spiritual care. Spirituality may be considered as an exploration of personal meanings, which may play a significant role as people face loss, dying and death and take the opportunity to look for answers and to reflect on their lives. Recent surveys indicate that 70% of patients with cancer would like the opportunity to discuss spiritual issues.<sup>1</sup>

Pastoral care workers offer (but do not impose) attention, time and the chance to explore the possibilities for personal and spiritual growth at a time when patients and families may be facing some of the biggest questions in their lives.

Skills offered to the patient and their family may include:

- **time and skilled companionship** to explore matters of deep personal concern including existential issues
- **networking** with local community faith groups
- **open reflection** on matters of faith which include quiet reflection, prayer and ritual
- **encouragement** and supporting those relationships that give meaning<sup>2</sup>
- **exploration**
  - of core values, meanings and practices that integrate the patient's experiences
  - in a quest for meaning, using such questions as
    - "What is the purpose of my life?"
    - "Where do I belong?"
    - "What can I hope for?"
- **practical support** in planning memorial or funeral services
- **provision of supportive customs or rituals** including communion, prayer, last rites
- completion of a **spiritual assessment** (an example of a simple spiritual assessment tool – the FICA Tool, is provided in see Section 2.1- *Assessment Guidelines*)

### references

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<sup>1</sup> Balducci L, Meyer R (2001) "Spirituality and medicine: a proposal." *Cancer Control* 8: 368-376.

<sup>2</sup> Rumbold B (2003). Caring for the spirit: lessons from working with the dying. *MJA* 179 S11-S13.