Objectives

- To identify the advantages and disadvantages of spirituality among the terminally ill and how their spirituality can affect their medical decisions.
- To identify the various types of spirituality including religious and non-religious types.
- To recognize therapeutic methods being used to assist this population with reducing anxiety and finding inner peace.

Definitions

- Merriam-Webster learners dictionary defines spirituality as: “The quality or state of being concerned with religion or religious matters”.
- Meezenbroek et. Al. define spirituality as: “one’s striving for an experience of connection with the essence of life”, which encompasses three main dimensions: connectedness with oneself, connectedness with others and nature, and connectedness with the transcendent.
Definitions

- A more modern definition of spirituality is related to finding inner peace, finding a connection with inner wisdom, and being able to understand oneself and truly experience what life has to offer.

What is Anxiety

- Anxiety is an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it.
- Other symptoms that might present with anxiety: extreme worry, restlessness, tachycardia, hyperventilation, panic disorder, insomnia, restlessness, and agitation.

As Bolen quoted:

- “Illness is both soul-shaking and soul-evoking for the patient and for all others for whom the patients matters. We lose innocence, we know vulnerability, we are no longer who we were before this event, and we will never be the same.”

(Bole, 1996)
Spirituality as a Way of Coping With a Terminal Condition

- Patients find comfort and look for unanswered questions.
- Spirituality can help the terminally ill reach acceptance.

Spirituality Study

• Shukla and Rishi (2014) conducted a study in India: It was a correlational study with 80 participants, 45 male and 35 females from various parts, states in India with advance stage cancer. In this study, they used various tools including a spirituality 12 item scale designed to measure patients’ important aspects of spirituality, such as a sense of meaning in one’s life, harmony, peace-fullness, and a sense of strength and comfort from one’s faith. The results show that over 61 participants who have good social support and a strong spiritual life leads to a acceptance of disease and a better quality of life.

Spirituality as a Way of Coping With a Terminal Condition

• Research shows that Terminally ill patients tend to turn to spirituality in search of meaning. Spirituality has taken a major role with the terminally ill population since this is a time when patients and their loved ones are presented with tremendous life changes, a time when mortality becomes a reality, a time of vulnerability and mourning is essential to improve quality of life. Therefore, the search for inner peace, inner wisdom, and being able to connect with “something or someone beyond the human level, such as the universe, transcendent reality, a higher power or God” becomes important.

Meezenbroek, et. Al., 2012
Spirituality as a Way of Coping With a Terminal Condition

- Patients find comfort and look for unanswered questions. For instance, they might question why they got the terminal condition they have.
- Patients are hoping to reach acceptance. Acceptance of the illness, acceptance of the unavoidable, acceptance that they will not be able to reach the goals they might have set their minds to, acceptance that they might not be able to see their children grow, graduate, get married; accepting that they will not be able to continue caring for their spouse, their children, their pet. Accepting that their life is likely to soon be over.

    Grace, 2012

Spirituality as a Way of Coping With a Terminal Condition

- It gives the individual the opportunity to do a life review. It allows one to evaluate and re-evaluate past/present behaviors, actions, and experiences.

    Jacob, 2004

Disadvantages to Spirituality

- Religion can cause spiritual pain
- Guilt, or feeling condemned/rejection
- “doctrines of eternal judgment”
- “discouraging the process of an individualized search for a meaning”
- Fear of God/punishment
- The need for reconciliation/forgiveness

    “Spirituality and Palliative Care”, 2009
Methods Used to Reduce Anxiety

➢ Counseling
➢ Education and completion of an Advance Directive or a Power of Attorney

Methods Used to Reduce Anxiety

Traditional spiritual methods:
➢ Reading the Bible
➢ Attending religious services
➢ Prayer
➢ Confession

Methods Used to Reduce Anxiety

Contemporary Spirituality Methods
➢ Art Therapy
➢ Poetry
➢ Music
➢ Dramatic arts
➢ Quilting
➢ Journaling
➢ Letters

Admin, 2005
Methods Used to Reduce Anxiety

- Physical activity: walking, running, biking, yoga, tai chi, etc.
- Hypnotherapy
- Relaxation techniques:
  - Meditation

Methods Used to Reduce Anxiety

- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Guided imagery:

Conclusion

- Spirituality is part of our daily living, but even more important is a wonderful tool highly beneficial for those facing end of life. The components involving spirituality allows the person to reduce anxiety and find meaning of the great things life has to offer. Spirituality is so versatile in today's world which suits itself to be available for anyone who wishes to reach that inner peace.
References

- Grace, E. Spiritual issues for the terminally ill. http://www.terminalillness.co.uk/spiritual-issues-for-the-terminally-ill.html
- The Light-Hope. Downstream: guided imagery meditations. 2011