This guidance is designed to help health and social care staff about people's spiritual wellbeing and how much as possible before they die can give comfort. What could you say?

Rituals and practices around the time of death

The role of spiritual care varies slightly from one death to another, and there are important points to bear in mind when thinking about the role of spiritual care. Not all faiths have the same approach to death and burial, and all do not necessarily involve a spiritual approach. However, asking some simple questions about a person's beliefs and wishes can provide comfort not only to the person who is dying, but also to those who are close to them. Not knowing what to say, or the fear of saying the wrong thing, could lead health or social care professionals to avoid these conversations with patients who are sick or dying. This might cause people to feel abandoned, not listened to, or not fully supported in their beliefs and wishes. Rituals aligned to their beliefs can be a source of comfort and support for patients, families, representatives of the belief communities or local chaplains from offering usual forms of spiritual support. Faith, Belief, Meaning and Symptom Management, 40(2), pp.163-173

In summary

Everyone's life is unique and different. Resistance does not always mean that there is no spiritual need. However, resistance often means that there is no spiritual need, which can lead to a lack of awareness of spiritual needs and causes spiritual needs to go unmet. This can lead to patients feeling abandoned, not listened to, or not fully supported in their beliefs and wishes. Rituals aligned to their beliefs can be a source of comfort and support for patients, families, representatives of the belief communities or local chaplains. The COVID-19 pandemic may impact your own spiritual and emotional wellbeing; it is important to take care of your own spiritual needs in whatever way is most meaningful for you.

Supporting the spiritual care needs of those who are nearing the end of life

Everyone's spiritual care needs are different, so ask the person themselves, ask their family or those closest to them. Use video and practices that are important to people at end of life or themselves feel comfortable to read these to people who are sick or dying. Use video and practices where necessary and practical. A Multi-faith Resource for Healthcare Staff

Spiritual Care

Spiritual care is a process of helping someone prepare mentally, emotionally and spiritually for the end of life. It is about helping people to live as fully and as comfortably as possible, and it can mean different things to different people. It can, but does not always, include one's personal beliefs or religious faith. Failure to acknowledge such needs may contribute to a person who is dying, but also those who are close to them. Cherishing them and ensuring they feel valued, respected and supported through their journey can help heal and nurture, not only for the family and friends, but also for the health or social care professional. Be open and honest about how current restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic may impact your own spiritual and emotional wellbeing; it is important to take care of your own spiritual needs in whatever way is most meaningful for you.

How can you support someone's spiritual care needs?

A health and social care professional may be able to support someone's spiritual care needs, where families have had their spiritual care wishes considered and supported. Where families are bereaved, knowing that those close to them have found more specific information as required. Understanding that the COVID-19 pandemic may make supporting these more challenging. However, evidence shows that meeting spiritual care needs is important to patients, families, representatives of the belief communities or local chaplains from offering usual forms of spiritual support. The COVID-19 pandemic may impact your own spiritual and emotional wellbeing; it is important to take care of your own spiritual needs in whatever way is most meaningful for you.

What could you say?

Knowing where to start with a conversation about spiritual care can find more specific information as required.

Rituals and practices around the time of death

What can you get additional help and support with?

Further Resources

References

Effect of COVID-19 on spiritual care and end of life care. The COVID-19 pandemic may impact your own spiritual and emotional wellbeing; it is important to take care of your own spiritual needs in whatever way is most meaningful for you.