

# European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health

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## Editorial

### Dear colleagues, dear friends,

The year 2010 was an amazing one with a number of highlights: the European Conference in Bern, the Conference in Odense/Denmark and the TASK meeting in Witten/Herdecke. Another highlight was the establishment of a Professorship for Spiritual Care at Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. The position will be filled in equal measure by two theologians, the Protestant Prof. Traugott Roser and his Catholic counterpart Prof. Eckhard Frick

In the present newsletter Joachim Arnold summarizes the research findings of his Master Thesis on "Spirituality in Psychiatric Institutions with a Diaconal Background" which shows interesting results.

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year.

*René Hefti, MD*

## Topic

### Spirituality of Co-Workers in Psychiatric Institutions with a Diaconal Background

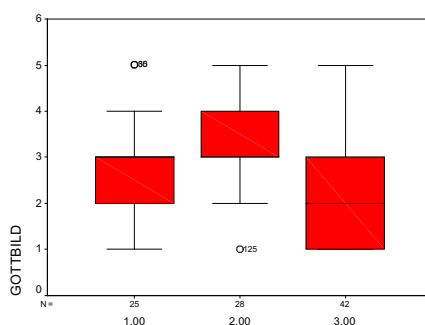
#### Background of the Research Project

Between November 2009 and March 2010 a total of 40 questionnaires investigating the kind of spiritual effects co-workers experience in their every-day work were sent to 7 psychiatric institutions (with a diaconal background) in Switzerland (2) and Germany (5). The standardized questionnaire contained five dimensions of spirituality: anthropological aspects; topics of dialogues between co-workers and patients; self-comprehension and self-reflection; meaning of the bible; institutional and organizational aspects. Information about the personal interpretation of spirituality could also be given. The average feedback rate was about 48% (lowest rate: 20%; highest rate: 80%). 137 co-workers took part in the study.

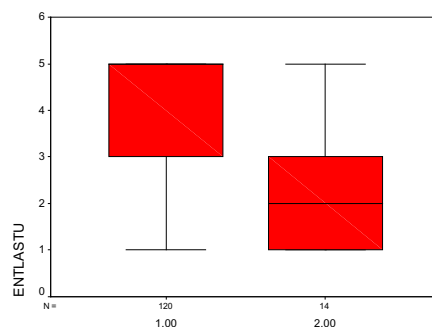
#### Research Findings

The highest agreement rates were found for the following three items (between 0 = I don't agree and 5 = I totally agree): 4,64 for a respectful and esteeming attitude towards the patients, because each person is an image of god; 4,5 for encouragement to be careful with the own needs and 4,48 for the desire that leadership processes (as an expression for the spiritual orientation of the institution) should become as much as possible a partnership.

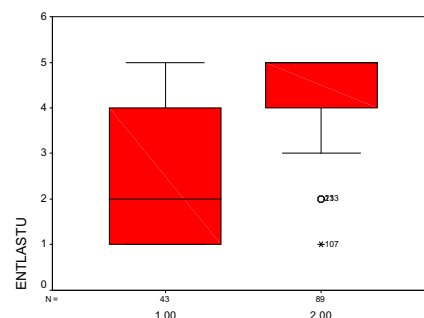
The first box-plot shows, that there are significant differences between the three professional groups (1 = doctors; 2 = therapists; 3 = caring staff) in the frequency of talking about the image of god patients have:



The co-workers of the psychiatric institutions also could agree on the statement, that spirituality means to find relief in a relationship to god in regard to the responsibility they have in their job. The next box-plot shows, that there are significant differences in the agreement rate for this item between those who associate esotericism with personal spirituality (2) and those who don't (1):



The last box-plot shows the agreement rate to the same item for those who associate praying with spirituality (2) and those who don't (1):



It seems to be a characteristic of practised christian spirituality to have somebody to communicate with about what praying basically means.

The co-workers also were asked to report about other spiritual traditions (beside the jewish-christian one) they relate to when working with patients. The following answers were given: *humanism (8x); buddhism (7x); enlightenment (4x); therapeutic schools (3x); education (2x); parents (2x); narrative-postmodern way of thinking; all religions; existentialism; human sciences; philosophy; experiences from Asia; analytic theories; yoga; empirical basics; forgiveness and love; kabbalism; mystic traditions; human rights.*

#### Discussion of the results

The results of the research show that although – on the operative level – a biblical understanding of God and men is losing importance, it draws – on the normative level – a dividing line between the different anthropological convictions (christian interpretation of men vs. homo oeconomicus and homo olympicus) and the different concepts of spirituality. Co-workers with a high agreement rate to the importance of the bible in their work-life report as a consequence of spirituality, that they experience significantly deeper satisfaction in practising their profession. They also report that they have more (highly signi-

ficant) conversations with patients including aspects of caring for mind and soul. It is also interesting that the agreement rate of co-workers associating esotericism with their personal spirituality correlates negatively (highly significant) with a respectful and estimating attitude towards the patients. Specific for christian spirituality is the aspect, that it is not a human factor among others (physical, social etc.), but seems to be a factor which has the power to integrate all other factors in human and social life. Four empiric arguments may underline this point of view:

1) Co-workers associating strength with spirituality want to take part in the leadership-processes within their institution. 2) Co-workers, who associate love with their personal spirituality want this love to be expressed in communication between leaders and staff within their institution. 3) Co-workers who associate community with their personal interpretation of spirituality want to close the gap between the reality inside and outside of their institution by being an advocate for persons suffering from psychiatric diseases. 4) Co-workers stating that spirituality is related to the Holy Spirit show 13 significant associations to personal life and work, whereas for co-workers relating spirituality to God or Jesus only 6 correlations to personal life and work were measured.

Considering the results of this study, further research should focus on the consequences different concepts of spirituality can have on work and life of co-workers in psychiatric institutions. The present study shows differences between esoteric and christian spirituality. Charity seems to be a specific property of the christian tradition expressing Gods love to men. There might be further differences between buddhistic, islamic and humanistic spiritualities.

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## References

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Kobler-von Komorowski, Susanne: „Religion bei MitarbeiterInnen: Fehlanzeige oder Chance für ein diakonisches Profil!?“; in Eurich, Johannes (Hg.): „Diakonisches Handeln im Horizont gegenwärtiger Herausforderungen“; DWI-Info 38; S. 43-58; Heidelberg 2006

Weiber, Erhard: „Das Geheimnis des Lebens berühren – Spiritualität bei Krankheit, Sterben und Tod“; Verlag W. Kohlhammer; Stuttgart 2008

## Announcements

**4th Geneva Conference 2011 on Person-Centered Medicine**  
*Core Conference May 2-4, 2011*  
*Workmeetings April 30-May 1, 2011*  
*Geneva University Hospital and World Health Organization*  
Geneva / Switzerland

[www.personcenteredmedicine.org/docs/geneva2011b.pdf](http://www.personcenteredmedicine.org/docs/geneva2011b.pdf)

**Internationaler Kongress “Spiritualität und Intimität - Tiefenerfahrung in Psychotherapie und Beratung”**  
*6. - 8. Mai 2011*  
*Inselhalle Lindau*  
Lindau / Germany

The Congress on “Spirituality and Intimacy” is organized by the International Society for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis, Vienna.

[www.existenzanalyse.org/Der-Kongress.403.0.html](http://www.existenzanalyse.org/Der-Kongress.403.0.html)

**3rd European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health**  
*May 2012*  
Bern / Switzerland  
Contact: René Hefti, [info@rish.ch](mailto:info@rish.ch)

**Pre-Conference Research Workshop with Prof. H.G. Koenig**  
*May 2012*  
Langenthal / Switzerland  
Contact: René Hefti, [info@rish.ch](mailto:info@rish.ch)

## Buchhinweis

**Gesundheit-Religion-Spiritualität**  
*Constantin Klein, Hendrick Berth, Friedrich Balck (Hrsg.)*  
Dezember 2010. Juventa Verlag.  
ISBN-10:3-7799-1979-6.

In vielen religiösen Traditionen wird ein enger Zusammenhang zwischen dem verkündeten religiösen Heil und konkreten Erfahrungen von Heilung an „Leib und Seele“ im Hier und Jetzt gesehen. Seit den 1990er Jahren ist jedoch ein rasanter Anstieg der Forschung zu Religion und Gesundheit besonders in den USA zu verzeichnen. Auch in Europa scheint es mittlerweile eine grundsätzliche Selbstverständlichkeit der Thematik zu geben, die sich neuen Einsichten über die Bedeutung kognitiver Merkmale, die Wirkung von Placebos sowie das Zusammenspiel kognitiver und affektiver mit neuronalen und immunologischen Prozessen verdankt.

Dieser Band versucht erstmalig, die bisherigen Befunde aus den deutschsprachigen Ländern zu sichten und in den internationalen Forschungsstand einzuordnen. Dazu wird die Thematik aus zwei grundlegenden Perspektiven betrachtet: der eine Fokus richtet sich auf die Bedeutung der Religiosität und Spiritualität innerhalb unterschiedlicher religiöser und weltanschaulicher Traditionen. Der zweite Fokus des Buches richtet sich auf die unmittelbaren gesundheitlichen Aspekte. Schliesslich wird diskutiert, in welcher Form Religion und Spiritualität in der ärztlichen, therapeutischen und pflegerischen Praxis berücksichtigt werden können.

### Impressum

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