

## Finding God's Plan for You by Mary J. Ferrill



Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) states: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Have you reflected on the meaning of this verse?

At first glance, people find comfort in Jeremiah 29:11 because it is reassuring to reflect on the fact that God wants good things for each of us. But if you look more closely, it starts with a powerful proclamation: "I know the plans I have for you."

The CPFPI board of directors and other CPFPI members attend the Global Missions Health Conference in Louisville, KY every year. Medical missionaries from around the world come to speak. One story that a speaker shared helps to illustrate the point that God has an individual plan for each of us. The story is about a husband and wife, one a veterinarian and the other a pediatrician. Both were atheists. The husband decided to go back to school to become an MD, which caused the family to move. While they were riding together in the car, the couple discussed where to send their 4-year-old daughter to school. In the middle of their conversation, the daughter exclaimed, "I only want to go to a school where they teach about Jesus." The couple was surprised by her statement because they had never taken her to church or referred to the name "Jesus" in front of her. Nevertheless, they decided that it would not hurt her to go to a Christian school, and they agreed a private school was preferable to a public one. The mother took

the child to church to make sure she would feel comfortable in that environment. As a result, the mother, and subsequently the father, came to know Christ, all because a 4-year-old girl steadfastly heard and obeyed God's voice and followed His plan for her.

But the story doesn't end there. After becoming Christians, the couple followed God's plan for them to become medical missionaries in Africa. Several tribes lived in the area where they were stationed. Most of their time was spent ministering to an anti-Christian tribe around which they could not mention Christ for fear of death. They finally earned the trust of this tribe and were able to provide medical care. They soon realized that poor nutrition caused many of the tribe's medical problems because they relied on beef that was often tainted. The husband's veterinary background came in handy: He vaccinated their cattle and taught them how to do it. At first, the tribal leaders were skeptical of the missionaries' intentions; but eventually, the leaders came to trust in the sincerity of their service. In fact, the husband became one of the tribal leaders (the first white man to hold that position) and the tribe's laws about Jesus were revised. The original law called for anyone speaking about Jesus to be killed. The revision states that if a missionary speaks to you about Jesus, you MUST listen! As this story illustrates, God knew the plans He had for this couple long before they had the slightest idea of who God was and what that specific plan entailed. Little did they know how their daughter's choice of school would drastically alter the course of their lives, as well as bring them into a relationship with the God whose very existence they had denied. The major lesson from this story is that we need to be attentive to hear God's voice and

follow His plan so we can take part in all of the blessings that He has in store for us. A wonderful story in the Bible about God's plan and blessings is found in the book of Esther. She was a Jew who married the king of Persia. There was an order given that all Jews were to be slaughtered on a certain day. Esther's cousin Mordecai told her, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14 NIV). Esther heeded the call, saved the Jews, and preserved the line of the Messiah. God's plan for Esther certainly impacted everyone who has placed their trust in Jesus the Messiah for their salvation! In contrast, we can choose to be like Pharaoh at the time of Moses and stubbornly refuse to follow God's plan in spite of numerous miracles... or we can choose to be like Moses and give excuses to God as to why we cannot help with His plans and then later cooperate... or we can choose the best path as depicted by Mary, who responded to the angel regarding her virgin pregnancy: "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled" (Luke 1:38 NIV). Have you found God's plan for your life? If so, then you have experienced the blessings that come from following the Lord. If not, I encourage you to listen to the Lord so that you can take part in His great plan for you. Pure joy only comes from the Lord and is often found in the journey as well as the destination. As Jeremiah 29:11 tells us: God has a unique plan and purpose for each person's life and we should play a willing part in both of them. The quality of our life, from an eternal perspective, is defined by the extent to which we are obedient in following God's call.

## Incorporation of Soft Skills into the Curriculum through Coursework in Spirituality at Shenandoah University by Mark Johnson

### Introduction

Soft skills are becoming increasingly recognized as critically important in the workplace setting. Soft skills are defined as "personal attributes that enable someone to interact effectively and harmoniously with other people."<sup>1</sup> As applied to the practice of pharmacy, soft skills enable the practitioner to best interact and relate to patients, colleagues, and others in a self-aware and professional manner.

The 2013 Center for the Advancement of

Pharmacy Education (CAPE) outcomes and the 2016 Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) Standards have acknowledged the importance of these soft skills in the practice of pharmacy and now require pharmacy schools to incorporate them into their curricula along with the traditional pharmacy practice knowledge and skills outcomes.<sup>2,3</sup>

Soft skills (or the affective domain) are specifically addressed in ACPE Standard 3 (Approach to Patient Care) and Standard 4 (Personal and Professional Development).

Standard 3 (Approach to Patient Care) states: "The program imparts to the graduate the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and attitudes necessary to solve problems; educate, advocate, and collaborate, working with a broad range of people; recognize social determinants of health; and effectively communicate verbally and nonverbally." Key elements of this standard include: problem solving, education, patient advocacy, interprofessional collaboration, cultural sensitivity, and communication. Standard 4 (Personal and Professional Development) states: "The program imparts

to the graduate the knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors, and attitudes necessary to demonstrate self-awareness, leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship, and professionalism.” Key elements of this standard include: self-awareness, leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship, and professionalism.<sup>2</sup>

Pharmacy schools have approached incorporating these soft skills into their curricula in various ways. These standards can be achieved within the curriculum or co-curriculum. One way in which Shenandoah University Bernard J. Dunn School of Pharmacy is preparing their student pharmacists to develop soft skills is through various course offerings in spirituality as it relates to patient care. These offerings include a three credit hour elective, a lecture and case review in a P1 communications required course, and interprofessional education (IPE) offerings.

### **Spirituality in Patient Care Elective**

Acknowledging and incorporating spirituality into the care of patients is becoming increasingly recognized for its importance in treating the patient as a whole person (i.e., mind, body, and spirit). Incorporating spirituality can make a big difference in patient outcomes, and can strengthen the provider/patient relationship. In fact, the Joint Commission (which accredits hospitals) states that you must acknowledge and support a patient's spiritual/religious beliefs when patients are admitted to the hospital and other healthcare facilities.<sup>4</sup> There is much recent literature to support the importance of spirituality in healthcare, but it's really not a new concept since medicine had its roots in religion thousands of years ago.<sup>5</sup>

A three credit hour elective entitled “Spirituality in Patient Care” is offered to all health professions graduate students along with P2 and P3 pharmacy students. In this course, students explore the ever-expanding body of knowledge linking spirituality and patient care outcomes. This course is intended to give the student an overview of spirituality as it relates to healthcare and provide applications in the patient care arena. Emphasis is placed on the knowledge, skills, values, meanings, and experiences of spirituality as it relates to the patient, family, and the healthcare team. Students explore the literature linking spirituality and patient care outcomes, learn to take patient spiritual histories,<sup>6,7</sup> determine how various religions/faith traditions affect patients' health, design a spirituality research project, learn from guest practitioners as to how they incorporate spirituality into healthcare (e.g., faith community nursing, hospital chaplains, animal assisted therapy, music therapy). The course is designed to include both lectures and

discussions of the topics each week. Students also learn how to give presentations to their peers on spirituality topics. Various primary literature articles are used as readings during the course. The text used is *Spirituality in Patient Care: Why, How, When, and What* by Harold G. Koenig.<sup>8</sup> More specific course objectives subdivided by domains are listed below:

### **Knowledge**

1. Explore the definition of spirituality and its related theories as they apply to patient care and methods of measuring.
2. Describe a personal spirituality as a support for one's own practice in the health professions.
3. Examine a historical overview of spirituality in healthcare.

### **Skills**

4. Analyze theories and evaluate current research related to spirituality and patient outcomes, including mental health, physical disorders, health behaviors, and use of health services.
5. Explore the healthcare provider's role in spiritual care including spiritual assessment, interventions and evaluation of care provided.
6. Discuss clinical trials exploring aspects of spirituality in health.
7. Develop and present a research proposal exploring the relationship between spirituality and an aspect of patient care.

### **Values**

8. Compare and contrast religion, culture, the psychosocial dimension, morality and ethics to spirituality.
9. Explore world religions and their beliefs and values as they influence patient care.

### **Meanings**

10. Identify and define unique acronyms, rituals, symbols and unique meanings associated with providing spiritual care.
11. Identify boundaries and possible negative effects of providing spiritual care.
12. Discuss the basic roles of the spiritual care team including clergy, chaplains, and faith community nurses.

### **Experiences**

13. Collaborate with faculty and peers when discussing and planning spiritual care.
14. Perform a spiritual assessment on a patient.

### **P1 Communications Course**

This required 2.5 credit hour P1 course provides the opportunity for students to develop and apply communication skills needed to interact effectively in healthcare. Students not only learn how to communicate

with patients and healthcare providers through development of oral and written communication skills, but they also develop an understanding of cultural, psychological, and sociological challenges, and healthcare disparities that may impact communication with patients.<sup>9</sup> Spirituality as a topic within this course includes a two-hour session composed of a general overview of spirituality in a traditional lecture format followed by reinforcement of material via scenarios that might be encountered in practice. Students likewise practice taking a spiritual history with their classmates within the class. Incorporating spirituality into a P1 required course assures that all pharmacy students will be exposed to spirituality and highlights its importance in patient care in the formative years of pharmacy school.

### **Spirituality IPE Offerings**

An IPE activity was developed and offered in the Spring 2018 semester in collaboration with the Shenandoah University Director of IPE. The activity included students in the Spirituality in Patient Care elective and Physician Assistant (PA) Program student volunteers. The activity was divided into three sections: 1) performing a spiritual assessment; 2) reviewing a patient case that incorporated a patient's spirituality/religion; and 3) reflection on the experience. This activity was intended to increase the comfort of both pharmacy and PA students in performing a spiritual assessment that could be applied in practice by simulating the experience with their classmates. Also, the activity was intended for each profession to work together to solve a patient case in which spirituality played a role in the care of a patient and to determine how each profession would approach the case. Based on preliminary observations, students overall were very positive about the experience and felt that it enhanced their learning on the topic from each other. The following is a more detailed description of each section of the activity:

#### **Performing a Spiritual Assessment**

- Pharmacy and PA students were assigned in pairs and connected either in person or remotely.
- Students practiced taking a spiritual assessment of each other.
- Pharmacy students used one of the spiritual assessment tools that were discussed in class or in the text (e.g., HOPE<sup>6</sup>, FICA<sup>7</sup>). PA students used a method taught in their program.

#### **Patient Case incorporating a patient's religion/spirituality**

- Students in pairs reviewed a case that incorporated a patient's spirituality.
- Each student discussed how they would approach the patient from their profession's

perspective.

### Reflection

• Students reflected on the experiences by answering the following questions:

#### 1. Performing a Spiritual Assessment

- Have you ever talked to a patient about their spirituality? Was it difficult for you? What do you think is the value in performing a spiritual assessment?
- How do you feel your fellow health professions student performed? How was it different from how you approached this based on your profession?

#### 2. Patient Case

- What is the value in assessing the patient's religion/spirituality in this case?
- How did your profession's approach to this case differ from your colleague's perspective?

Another larger group IPE activity has been planned for spring 2018. This activity will be conducted in a workshop format for the health professions students who are divided into 41 groups with a faculty facilitator for each group. A case incorporating five required IPE elements will be utilized for the students to solve as an interprofessional group. Since this is the first year to incorporate spirituality in this manner, an optional spirituality element will be added to the cases to determine ways in which the patient's spiritual beliefs or practices might impact the care plan of the patient. The data will be analyzed by students completing an independent research project once the cases are completed. The results of this could certainly impact the direction of

the workshop in future years.

### Conclusion

The importance of soft skills in pharmacy practice has become increasingly recognized and valued. Most patients will expect their pharmacist to have the appropriate knowledge and skills from their training in pharmacy school to deliver optimal patient care. However, the way in which the pharmacist approaches, interacts, and treats the patient (i.e., soft skills) can make an even further and lasting impact. Recognizing the value of a patient's spirituality and incorporating spirituality into the patient's care is a very important way in which soft skills can be applied in pharmacy practice. In this manner, schools are preparing student pharmacists to develop soft skills that ultimately relate to Christ-like qualities.

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## How God Used a Pharmacy Student: Reflections on a Medical Mission Trip to Honduras

by Rachel Kozinski

When I returned home from my first short-term medical mission trip to Ghana, I was already looking for another mission opportunity. For me, nothing is more rewarding than partnering in the work God is doing overseas. My search led me to Cornerstone Ministries and Hospital Loma de Luz, a mission hospital in the Honduran jungle along the Caribbean coast, which serves an unreached group of villages with limited access to healthcare or the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In October 2017, I joined their team as their only worker with any formal pharmacy training. This was quite an intimidating amount of responsibility for a pharmacy student in my final year of school. I understood how much experience and knowledge I lacked, but I knew that I carried a unique perspective that could bless this facility and their patients. I was also assured that the Lord had prepared this work in advance for me to do (Ephesians 2:10). In courage and trust in God's plan, I began my month of service and, consequently, my month of transformation into the pharmacist God wants me to be.

### Welcome to Honduras and Loma de Luz

Honduras is a beautiful place to learn and grow. The thick green jungle spreads over the mountains rising against the ocean. Trees with broad leaves grow close together, allowing just enough light for the rainbow of flowers and ferns planted below. Howler monkeys scream from branches, and a diverse array of bird calls fill the air.

Along the solitary dirt highway lining the foothills and the Caribbean Sea stand the tiny houses of Balfate and other villages belonging to the Colon coastal region. No matter if the walls are made from plaster or mud, the roofs from thatch or tin, these poor living conditions expose this population to a variety of infections. Harsh work in the farmers' fields could incur a machete wound, poisonous snake bite, or motorcycle crashes along the pothole-ridden dust roads. Expectant mothers lack prenatal care, and genetic disposition increases risk for obesity, hypertension, and diabetes.

In order to bring healthcare to this isolated corner of the world, Hospital Loma de Luz was established 10 years ago, and it has been staffed by an extraordinary team of Hondurans and medical missionaries ever since. Each morning at 8 am, the hospital gate opens and patients flood into the waiting room, filling the empty seats. The triage physician that day