



The Royal **Children's**
Hospital Melbourne



SPIRITUAL CARE DEPARTMENT

Summary of Service Provision

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Location:
Prayer and Meditation Space, Murrup Biik,
North Building, Ground Floor.

What is Spiritual Care?

Spiritual Health Association describes Spiritual Care as “the provision of assessment, counselling, support and ritual in matters of a person’s beliefs, traditions, values and practices enabling the person to access their own spiritual resources”ⁱ. This definition draws upon the Australian Classifications of Health Interventions ICD 10AM/ACHI/ACS Spiritual Intervention Codesⁱⁱ in functionally describing spiritual care practice.

Other definitions take a more holistic approach to describe spiritual care such as the NHS Scotland, who describe spiritual care in the health care setting as “that care which recognises and responds to the needs of the human spirit when faced with trauma, ill health or sadness and can include the need for meaning, self-worth, to express oneself, for faith support, perhaps for rites or prayer or sacrament, or simply for a sensitive listener.”ⁱⁱⁱ

A key component of spiritual care practice is person-centred care. The **Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care** describes person centred care as follows:

“Person-centred care is widely recognised as a foundation to safe, high-quality healthcare. It is care that is respectful of, and responsive to, the preferences, needs and values of the individual patient. It involves seeking out and understanding what is important to the patient and their family, fostering trust, establishing mutual respect, and working together to share decisions and plan care. Person-centred approaches to care can lead to improvements in safety, quality, and cost effectiveness, as well as improvements in patient and staff satisfaction^{iv}”

Person-centred care aligns with child-centred family-focussed practice.

Spiritual concerns are important to many patients and families. A bio-psycho-social-spiritual model takes a **holistic approach** to health care, addressing the totality of the patient's relational existence - physical, psychological, social, and spiritual^v. The model seeks to acknowledge the whole person and to assist patients/families/clients to meet their needs. A bio-psycho-social-spiritual approach to care includes consideration of the following domains – **physical** needs, **social** needs, **spiritual** needs, **emotional** needs, and **psychological** needs^{vii}.



Background

The Royal Children's Hospital has a long history of Spiritual Care reaching back to the earliest days of the Hospital. In the early 2010s the Hospital created the (then) Pastoral Care Department under the Executive Director Nursing and Allied Health and Chief Nursing Officer, Director of Allied Health and Manager Social Work. The Department is led by the coordinator of Spiritual Care (a paid employee of the RCH) and staffed by honorary employees who are funded by faith communities who provide **inclusive, person centred, family focused spiritual care** to the RCH community.

In 2022, the service formally changed to Spiritual Care.

Spiritual Care at RCH has been included as an Allied Health discipline for some years, recently Safer Care Victoria recommended that Health Services recognise Spiritual care as an Allied Health discipline. In this context Spiritual Care may be seen as an emerging Allied Health discipline.

Service agreements are used to manage the relationship with faith communities and honorary staff. Each of the honorary practitioners work solely at the RCH under the policies and procedures of the RCH. The Department provides quality spiritual care to patients, families and staff as required.

Spiritual Care Services at the Royal Children's Hospital

At the Royal Children's Hospital spiritual care practitioners offer a person-centred approach to patients, families, and staff by:

- Providing respectful and non-judgemental listening
- Assisting patients and families to consider and work through their feelings/thoughts and consider coping strategies and the like
- Journeying with individuals and families during times of stress, loss, and grief
- Suggesting spiritual resources consistent with the beliefs and values of a patient/family
- Caring for the "spirit" of the person - encouraging a holistic approach to care
- Facilitating the meeting of religious and/or spiritual needs of patients and families
- Connecting with people's inner strength and hope if and where appropriate

Our team of professional spiritual care practitioners is trained to offer a person-centred, inclusive service. We work as members of the multi-disciplinary team addressing the needs of patients and families. We offer a respectful spiritual care service that honours the dignity and value of each person. Spiritual care practitioners care for patients and families from all faith traditions or none, and are available to anyone who would like to receive inclusive, person centred care and support.

Spiritual care practitioners can assist patients and families with a range of spiritual and religious needs. Please see the Spiritual Care website for more details: <https://rch.org.au/cpc>

RCH Prayer and Meditation Space – Murrup Biik

The Department provides a **universal sacred space** that is 'a welcoming and harmonious sanctuary of peace and spirituality where everyone can feel safe and comfortable to engage in their spirituality'^{viii}. This is a key component of the "Guidelines for Quality Spiritual Care in Health". Paediatric hospitals (and some other acute care hospitals) from across Melbourne and Australia use the RCH sacred space as an example/benchmark of a high-quality sacred space environment. The Sacred Space is a place for prayer and meditation for people of all faiths and/or no faith.

The sacred space area is located on the Ground Floor in the **North Building, adjacent to the Family Hub** – look for the yellow overhead Signage titled **Prayer and Meditation Space – Murrup Biik**. This is a comfortable quiet space that is available to patients, families, and staff. It has no religious symbols or artefacts and has a tranquil outlook onto a water feature and garden/courtyard. Prayer rooms are adjacent to the sacred space area for those who wish to use those spaces. Prayer rooms may have religious symbols displayed.



Spiritual Care Referrals

Please consult the referral documents on the Spiritual Care website for comprehensive details regarding the referral process.

Spiritual care practitioners are best placed to meet the needs of patients and families when there is a request for support which: -

- is directly identified by the family/patient
- relates to Rituals
- is for Sacramental Care (baptism, naming, anointing, etc)
- is for prayer
- is related to religious practice
- is related to an exploration of spiritual resources available
- is for prayer, anointing or blessing **prior to or following** surgery
- is related to assisting staff with appropriate (culturally safe) care of patients and families

On-Call Service

The RCH Spiritual Care Team offers an **After-Hours On-Call Service** to ensure spiritual care cover **after normal business hours (8.30am to 4.30 pm weekdays–, throughout** weekends and public holidays. The On-Call service is staffed by the RCH Spiritual Care Team and managed by the Coordinator. RCH switchboard makes all On-Call contacts with the after-hours duty practitioner to facilitate triage of patient and family needs. An appropriate plan is then agreed with staff and/or families as appropriate.

The On-Call service is targeted to address: -

- urgent patient and family requests for support/care,
- family support upon redirection of care,
- the provision of appropriate end of life care when death of a child is imminent,

- the provision of support to families grieving the death of a child.
- the provision of sacramental care to patients and families requesting it e.g. Baptism, anointing,
- the provision of prayer, anointing or blessing prior to or following surgery,
- the provision of assistance to staff with appropriate (culturally safe) care of patients and families,
- the provision of assistance to patients and families experiencing emotional, spiritual and/or moral distress.

Standards of Practice and Related Documents

Spiritual Care at the Royal Children’s Hospital adheres to industry standards. Links to the appropriate documents and RCH policies are available on the Spiritual Care website.

<https://rch.org.au/cpc>

Visiting Spiritual Carers

The Royal Children’s Hospital also contracts with faith communities to allow suitably trained and credentialed visiting Spiritual Carers to attend to the needs of patients and families on a regularly scheduled basis. The contracting of such visitors operates under the Royal Children’s Hospital Visiting Volunteer Program, managed by the Volunteer Service in consultation with the Coordinator of Spiritual Care as the departmental sponsor.

Endnotes:

ⁱ Spiritual Health Association, Guidelines for Spiritual Care in Health, p6,

<https://spiritualhealth.org.au/standards>

ⁱⁱ WHO (2017a) Alphabetical Index of Interventions. The World Health Organisation International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision, Australian Modification (ICD-10-AM), Australian Classification of Health Interventions (ACHI) and Australian Coding Standards (ACS) WHO ICD-10-AM/ACHI/ACS. Australian Consortium for Classification Development (ACCD: University of Sydney). Darlinghurst, NSW: Independent Hospital Pricing Authority, p. 235 (see Appendix 1)

ⁱⁱⁱ Spiritual Care Matters: An introductory resource for all NHS Scotland Staff: (2009) NHS Education for Scotland: www.nes.scot.nhs.uk

^{iv} Document available at <https://commission.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications/patient-centred-care-improving-quality-and-safety-through-partnerships-with-patients-and-consumers/> as at October 2, 2020.

^v.” Evidence for person-centred approaches to care in the Australian healthcare context can be found in *patient-centred care: Improving quality and safety through partnerships with patients and consumers*.

^{vi} A Biopsychosocial-Spiritual model for the care of Patients at the End of Life, Daniel P Sulmasy, OFM, MD, PHD, *The Gerontologist*, Vol. 42, Special issue III, 24-33.

^{vii} From Person- centred Care postcard.pdf, <https://spiritualhealth.org.au/resources>

^{viii} From the document “Guidelines for Quality Spiritual Care in Health”, SHA 2017, at <https://www.spiritualhealth.org.au/standards>