The Spiritual Determinants of Health

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Health: what is it

A new definition:
the ability to adapt and self manage
in the face of social, physical, and emotional challenges

Whose health?
Health of a person, a family, a community, a nation, health of the land, the environment, health of a society
The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.
Social determinants of health
Closing the Gap in a Generation

• Across all countries, illness and health inequalities are significantly determined by broad social factors
• These factors can be identified and acted upon in order to reduce health inequity and improve health
• It doesn’t have to be this way!

“Social justice is a matter of life and death. It affects the way people live, their consequent chance of illness, and their risk of premature death”.

Improve the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age

- Invest in the early years of life, as this is where health inequity begins
- Improve living environments, both urban and rural
- Improve working conditions
- Universal access to social protection and healthcare from cradle to grave

Tackle the inequitable distribution of power money and resources

- Make health equity an explicit goal in all policies across government
- Strengthen public financing nationally and internationally and target public finance to reduce health inequity
- Encourage a responsible private sector and strengthen government regulation of harmful commodities
- Tackle gender inequity
- Improve political empowerment, particularly of disadvantaged groups
- Make health equity a global development goal

Measure and understand the problem and assess the impact of action

- Establish routine systems to monitor health inequity locally, nationally and globally
- Invest in research and the dissemination of research
- Raise public awareness of health inequity and train key players (policy-makers, stakeholders, practitioners)
Health is being destroyed by diseases, natural disasters and disasters that are “human-made”. All are driven by the forces of globalisation clashing together.
The new 21st C diseases: disorders of maladapted modernity

Disease burdens that are different

A disease vortex of Infectious and NCDs interplaying off each other to create a perfect storm

Co-morbidity and multi-morbidity
Examples of Social determinants

Leading to Actions/Choices

Biomarkers

Disease

Cardiovascular disease

Type 2 diabetes

Breast cancer

Colon cancer

Prostate cancer

Lung cancer

Chronic respiratory disease

Depression/mental disorders

Modifiable Risk Factors

McQuillan and Grant 2011
Spiritual determinants – what are they?

• The ways of thinking, of being, of finding meaning, of searching for connectedness and purpose and of making sense of self and others within relationships
• The link between the seen and the unseen, the “passing places” that we all sense and experience in different ways, and call different names.
• The sense of mystery, the numinous, the sacredness of the past, the present and the future
If we don’t understand spiritual needs and spiritual issues it is hard to see how they influence life

• To be connected to self, to others and to the transcendent
• To find meaning and purpose
• To love and be loved and to be valued for loving
• To be able to express personal beliefs and values, and fears and hopes

• To have a source(s) of hope and strength
• To trust and to be trusted
• A place and space - to pray, ritual cleansing, performing spiritual practices
What happens when these essential components are stripped away?
Understanding what spiritual distress may look like:

Distress may become evident when

- A sense of dignity is lost, maybe through changed body image,
- Powerlessness replaces powerfulness
- When there is social isolation
- When there is anger about the past, the future, the present

- Spiritual Distress can manifest itself emotionally and physically
- Anger
- Guilt
- Sorrow and tears and regret
- Fear
- Hopelessness and nihilism
- Sleeplessness
- Increased anxiety
- Increased sense of pain
- Unfulfilled Cravings
- Abusive behaviours
A deficits approach – traditional health system structures

Diseases

Health systems tackling illness: preventing/curing/managing

A belief that medical systems make and keep people healthy
Building on WHO commission

Determinants driving health

Health, social educational and economic systems tackling determinants to improve health
Assets

• “the collective resources which individuals and communities have at their disposal, which protect against negative health outcomes and promote health status”.

• The asset approach values the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections and potential in a community.

• Asset based approaches for health improvement: redressing the balance Glasgow Centre for Population Health October 2009
  http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/2627/GCPH_Briefing_Paper_CS9web.pdf
Co-production, joint improvement, enabling people to become the people they were born to be

Determinants driving health

Being and Belonging

Recognising, trusting, valuing, enabling, empowering, listening

Systems: Health, social educational, economic and spiritual care systems working along side people within communities to tackle determinants to improve health
Revisiting health: with a faith lens

Components of health

- Psychological
- Social
- Spiritual
- Physical

Information
On his Blindness

- When I consider how my light is spent
  Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
  And that one Talent which is death to hide
  Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
  To serve therewith my Maker, and present
  My true account, lest He returning chide,
  "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
  I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
  That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
  Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best
  Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
  Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,
  And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
  They also serve who only stand and wait.

John Milton
Tread softly

HAD I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams

W.B. Yeats