

# REVIEWS

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## BOOKS

**Spiritual Care: Nursing Theory, Research, and Practice.** Elizabeth J. Taylor\*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002, 296 pages, \$42.

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*Spiritual Care: Nursing Theory, Research, and Practice* is a timely publication that illustrates the importance of spirituality and its relevance to human existence and, more specifically, to nursing practice. This publication offers a concise overview of a wide range of topics and succeeds in fulfilling its goal of bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Novice and seasoned nurses are the text's intended audience; however, the material is so well presented that it also is an excellent resource for chaplains and other healthcare providers who can benefit from understanding how spirituality affects or influences patient care. Oncology nurses will find a chapter about the meaning of suffering particularly valuable. The text is clear, convincing, and profound. The author skillfully explores the sensitive yet prevalent subject of spiritual care in nursing assessment and reassessment of patients.

*Spiritual Care's* uniqueness lies in its presentation. Although a holistic approach is widely understood among nurses, the author addresses spirituality on an individual level so that readers can easily understand the importance of considering every aspect of patients' lives.

The text is divided into three parts. Exploring Spirituality provides readers with conceptual, theoretical, empirical, and historical information. Nursing the Spirit: Application to Practice

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offers specific nursing practice guidelines, including assessment strategies, communication techniques, and a discussion on nurses' role as spiritual generalists. Promoting Spiritual Health rounds out the text and discusses a variety of religious practices, observations, and rituals.

The book's major strength is its overall readability. In addition to the narrative portions of the text, "boxed features" offer further illustration of the presented concepts and are highlighted for readers in easy-to-read bulleted boxes. These features include a nurse's or client's story, research profiles, and "look within to learn," which encourages nurses' spiritual development through self-reflection. These sections add a practical dimension to the concepts presented as well as commentary about topics such as spiritual assessment, planning of care, documentation, ethical concerns, approaches to nurturing the spirit, and case studies. The case studies can be used to assist nurses in the application of the concepts presented. Several case studies feature the care of patients with cancer, which offers special appeal to oncology nurses.

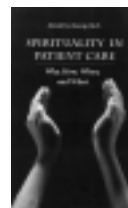
*Spiritual Care* does not include the scholarly discourse that is familiar in nursing and medical literature; instead, the text is an easy-to-use, clinically oriented guidebook backed by current, empirically based nursing research. The author not only references her own research but also the work of other distinguished practitioners and nurse researchers, many of whom belong to the oncology specialty.

In times of calamity and despair such as those seen in our nation and throughout the world, people usually turn their attention to their sources of comfort and hope. For many, that may be found in their spiritual practices. This well-designed book is an excellent resource for caregivers as they attempt to address some of the many spiritual needs of their patients.

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**Spirituality in Patient Care: Why, How, When, and What.** Harold G. Koenig. Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2002, 123 pages, \$14.95.

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*Spirituality in Patient Care: Why, How, When, and What* is an excellent, concise guide about the assessment and care of patients' spiritual well-being. Although targeted for physicians, residents, and medical students, this resource is useful for nurses and other healthcare professionals interested in identifying and addressing their patients' spiritual needs. Traditionally, the clergy and hospital pastoral care services have managed patients' spiritual care. Not so, states the author, whose book emphasizes that spiritual care is an important function of physicians. Patients' outcomes depend significantly on their spiritual well-being.

The book's seven chapters discuss the why, how, when, and what of spiritual assessment and care. The value of holistic care (i.e., care of mind, body, and spirit) is evident in this timely guide. *Spirituality in Patient Care* begins with a discussion of "why." Research data that are supportive of spiritual well-being's vital importance to physical health are reviewed. According to the author, "Religious beliefs often influence medical decisions" and "unless the physician knows about such beliefs, how can he/she adequately manage the patient's care?" To address these needs, an adequate spiritual history must be obtained to provide important information and reassure patients that their physicians are open to their needs. However, this history should be taken at the appropriate time.

Many benefits exist for addressing spiritual issues for patients and physicians. Patients will be able to cope with their illness, the doctor-patient relationship may improve, and, in many cases, patients express a desire for their physicians to pray with them. Physicians may benefit as well, in that practicing holistic medicine may lead to greater fulfillment and a return of idealism that may have been lost previously. These issues must be addressed with sensitivity, caution, and adequate training or results can be negative and lead to dissatisfaction of patients or their families.

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Ease of Reference and Usability	Content Level	Book Size
🕒 Quick, on-the-spot resource ✓	Basic	📖📖 Pocket size
🕒🕒 Moderate time requirement ✓ ✓	Intermediate	📖📖📖 Intermediate
🕒🕒🕒 In-depth study ✓ ✓ ✓	Advanced and complex, prerequisite reading required	📖📖📖📖 Desk reference

The author addresses boundaries and barriers to spiritual care, stating that physicians are limited in their expertise. Most cannot provide theologic explanations for spiritual distress and may ask chaplains to speak with patients. However, consent is needed for this. Lack of knowledge or training, time constraints, discomfort with the subject, fear of imposing religious views on patients, and wanting to avoid a task that is not within a job description all are physician barriers. The text offers thorough explanations of ways to break these barriers.

A chapter is devoted to occasions when religion is harmful. This discussion details how religious beliefs can cause patients to forgo necessary medical care and how physicians can address this issue. The final chapter offers a complete list of resources about the interconnectedness of spirituality and health. Summaries accompany these resources.

*Spirituality in Patient Care* is an easy read with helpful summaries at the end of each chapter. With this book as a reference, health-care professionals will further their skills in spiritual care.

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**Spirituality in Nursing: Standing on Holy Ground (2nd ed.).** Sister Mary Elizabeth O'Brien. Boston: Jones and Bartlett, 2003, 387 pages, \$44.95.

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*Spirituality in Nursing: Standing on Holy Ground*, a thorough, clinically oriented overview, is written for a general nursing audience. The author's stated and achieved purpose is "to explore the relationship between spirituality and the practice of nursing" through 12 well-referenced chapters. Topics focus on spirituality and religion as they relate to the profession, nursing history, assessment, nurse-

patient relationships, chronic and acute illnesses, senior citizens, children and their families, grief and death, parish nursing, and mass casualty disasters. The content is timely and relevant to oncology nurses.

New in this second edition are updated references and separate chapters on parish and disaster nursing. The disaster-nursing section is grounded in the author's interviews with September 11 rescuers, who included more firefighters and police officers than nurses.

Readers will find the book easy to navigate. The table of contents provides descriptive chapter titles, each with distinct and useful subheadings. The book's index of terms is thorough, and each chapter begins with a short summary of contents and ends with a review of key points.

The primary strength and weakness of the book are the same. The text examines many issues broadly rather than attempting any in-depth analysis. Thus, the book is an up-to-date primer for readers wanting an overview but will leave nurses, who already are familiar with the literature, wishing for depth. However, nurses will find information about the author's own research valuable.

Some minor limitations related to repetition, definitions, and lack of conceptual clarity are scattered throughout the book, but these do not restrict its general usefulness. The author does not examine spirituality as it relates to nursing roles in education, research, management, and administration; she also does not define the distinctions between religion and spirituality.

*Spirituality in Nursing* primarily discusses the spiritual care of religious patients, but it also discusses the care of nonreligious patients. Formerly a chaplain and nurse and currently a professor at Catholic University of America, the author supports her ideas with research and extensive comments from patients, nurses, and families. Her honesty about her Judeo-Christian slant and her efforts to include other views may allow nurses from many faith traditions to use her ideas directly. Nonreligious nurses also may gain insight into the religious perspectives of patients and colleagues and may find her discussion of human needs (e.g., trust, hope, love, peace, courage) constructive.

The book's clinical orientation, broad scope, and careful organization make it useful to basic and advanced nurses in any specialty as well as faculty and students wanting to learn how to incorporate spirituality into practice.

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## W E B S I T E



**Name of site:** Spirituality.com  
**URL:** www.spirituality.com  
**Authorship:** Group: Christian Science Board of Directors

**Privacy statement:** present, comprehensive, and easy to find

**Disclosure statement:** present, comprehensive, and easy to find; fully funded by the authors

**Content highlights:** Spirituality.com is a true community for anyone seeking a deeper understanding of spirituality and life. This comprehensive resource can help everyone on a spiritual journey. The book *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures* by Mary Baker Eddy provided the vision for Spirituality.com. The book remains a premier spirituality source for the site. Also on this well-organized Web site are the Bible, articles about spiritual experiences, and other tools for spiritual growth. Spirituality.com provides meeting places to interact via discussions, live chats, articles, e-cards, and a study guide that can fuel a spiritual journey during illness.

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