

# Ideal Intervention Project e-Newsletter

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## The Knowledge Bases of Professions

Among the key traits that the historian Paul Starr identified as a defining characteristic of the professions is the organized way in which the profession accumulates relevant knowledge, organizes that knowledge in theoretical structures, validates this knowledge through systematic processes, and communicates this knowledge to members of the profession for achieving consensus on practice. “A profession, sociologists have suggested, is an occupation... that has a base in technical, specialized knowledge...” (Source: Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*. N.Y.: Basic Books, 1982. 15. In Henry G. Heffernan, “The Knowledge Bases of Professions,” unpublished paper, 2009. 17-18.)

The emerging profession of spiritual care (SC) has for more than 80 years been amassing great numbers of SC textbooks, association-specific manuals, case studies, and other writing in a widely dispersed SC knowledge base of sorts. Would it “pass muster” with Starr and members of other health care professions as “validated through systematic processes?” Alas, not likely, since this SC knowledge base consists mostly of top-down, deductively-arrived-at theories, anecdotal material, and schematics produced by professors, clinical educators, practitioners and committees. The exception is a growing body of SC studies conducted by researchers from outside the discipline of SC.

The Ideal Intervention Project (IIP), sanctioned by the ACPE Board of Representatives in 2007, is the only known inductive, from-the-bottom-up technical knowledge base of actual SC samples (including lessons learned) within the professional SC movement. The IIP is poised to provide the starting point for trials toward validating evidence based SC best practices, once institutional and funding support has been secured. In the meantime, several valuable applications for the IIP have become apparent. They are as follows.

## Four Immediate IIP Applications

1. “Are you or one of your students dealing with a difficult care situation? Go to <http://www.acperesearch.net> and click on *Ideal Intervention Paper (IIP)*. Then check the *Table of Contents* for a situation similar to yours and turn to the appropriate page in order to gain the insights of SC colleagues before proceeding with your own care giving.”
2. When your administrator asks, “What do you chaplains and educators actually *do*, anyway?” direct her/him to the location cited in 1. and say, “There you will find well over one hundred samples of what we chaplains and educators are actually doing, and how we would do it even better.”
3. Once certified, most SC practitioners and educators do not pursue ways to continue honing their specific clinical skills on a case-by-case level. The IIP is an excellent self-supervisory tool. Putting in writing how you might proceed differently in a similar situation locks in your learning. Forwarding that work to [mariejohn50@att.net](mailto:mariejohn50@att.net) for editing into the SC knowledge base will then allow others to benefit from your experience. To reinforce your trust in the process, the revision will be returned for your approval before anonymous entry into the Samples list.)
4. When a clinical chaplain or supervisory education student asks, “How can I best convey to a certification committee my care giving competence, the answer is, “In your case studies, be sure to include Ideal Intervention Papers, since they demonstrate both what you did and what you learned.”

## Definition of an Ideal SC Intervention

The March 2009 issue of the *e-News* included definitions of the terms *best practices*, *spiritual care best practices*, and *evidence based spiritual care*. The following definition of an *ideal SC intervention* is offered for your comment and suggestions. *An ideal SC intervention is a strategic act that maximizes a patient/client's capacity to use his or her own spiritual resources, and/or that carefully provides additional spiritual resources appropriate to the patient/client's values and situation, in order to meet a pressing need and support a process of healing.*

### Educators, Join the IIP Today!

Help students consolidate learning. Help them contribute to the free-access, anonymous national SC knowledge base. Add the material below the dotted line to your next student handbook and/or syllabus as a requirement. Confidentiality is assured.

----- Cut Here and Paste the Following Material into Student Handbook/Syllabus -----

### THE IDEAL INTERVENTION PAPER

You will consolidate your learning by selecting a verbatim previously presented to your peer group. Then, prepare an Ideal Intervention Paper (IIP) in light of insightful comments and suggestions made by those peers and supervisor. Use the simple five-step Ideal Intervention Form below.

Write the IIP in such a way that you or another chaplain could make a more effective intervention with patients, families or staff with similar spiritual/pastoral needs. *Do not address your learning issues*. The IIP should be prepared as a Word document suitable for forwarding as an e-mail attachment, and should include the following elements. Copy your supervisor with the forwarding cover e-mail message as evidence of your IIP submission to the national knowledge base editor.

#### Ideal Intervention Form

(For Use by All Spiritual Care Practitioners and CPE Students)

- 1. Statement of the Spiritual/Pastoral Care Central Issue** (e.g., Feeling Angry and Abandoned by God; Hope in Terminal Illness, etc.)
- 2. Narrative Summary of the Actual Spiritual/Pastoral Care Intervention** (No more than two paragraphs of narrative description. Take confidentiality precautions.)
- 3. Narrative Summary of the Ideal Spiritual/Pastoral Care Intervention** (No more than two paragraphs of narrative description of how you would do the intervention differently if given another opportunity. Write so that another practitioner with a similar situation could benefit from your insights.)
- 4. Resources that you would recommend to other spiritual care givers regarding this topic.** (Books, journal articles, pamphlets, etc.)
- 5. Forward a copy of this completed form to Knowledge Base Editor John Gleason at [mariejohn50@att.net](mailto:mariejohn50@att.net)** as a Microsoft Word attachment for inclusion with similar data toward validating evidence-based spiritual care (SC) best practices. Confidentiality precautions will be taken. You will approve the edited version for entry in the SC Knowledge Base. Thanks for your contribution!

(Please go to [www.ACPEresearch.net](http://www.ACPEresearch.net) and click on "Ideal Intervention Paper (IIP) Project" to view the free-access national SC Knowledge Base and for further information on the Project.)

## **Experienced SC Practitioners: Make a Professional Contribution for the Greater Good**

Experienced SC practitioners, please know that you too can use the five-step outline above to make your most memorable interventions available for study by others in complete anonymity. Cut and paste the above form into your files. Then create and submit your own IIPs as a vital part of your reflective practice. Confidentiality is assured, and you must okay any revision before its entry into the national SC knowledge base. Please remember, the ethical imperative and the professional challenge is to join in these timely efforts to learn at a deeper level, to contribute to the cause of eventually identifying, testing, and validating SC best practices, to keep getting paid, and most importantly, to better serve the SC needs of patients, family members and staff. Your IIPs will contribute significantly in these vital ways.