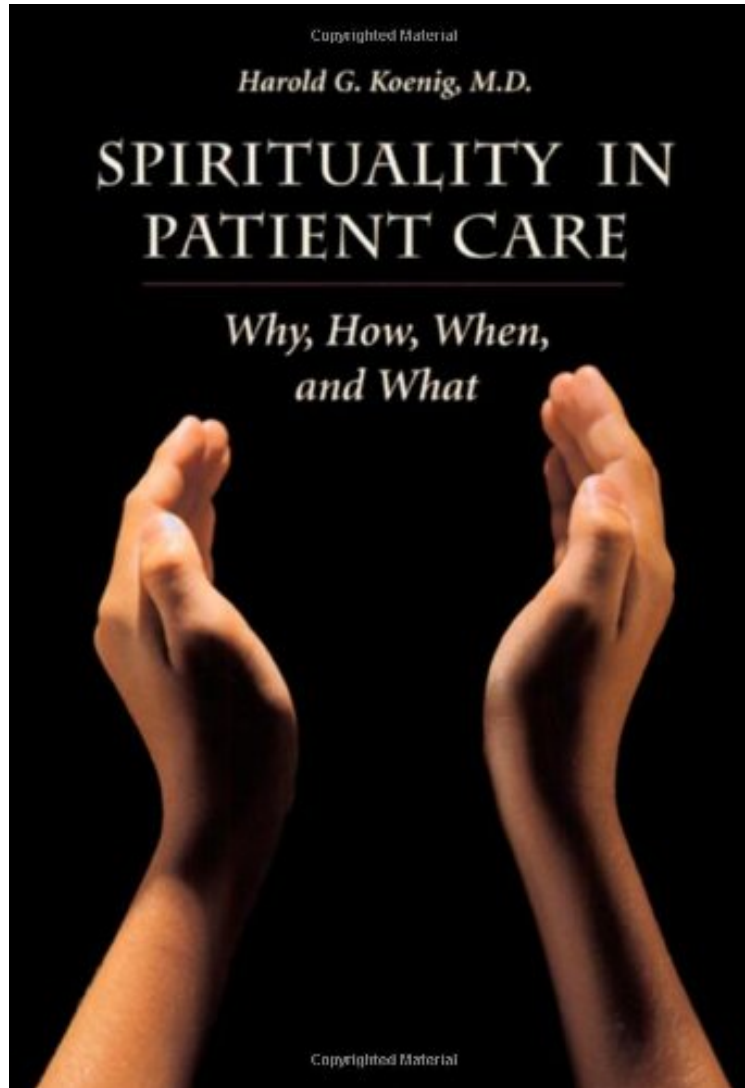


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Spirituality In Patient Care: Why How When What

Harold G. Koenig

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By Ken G Crawford

Through most of recorded history spiritual beliefs and religious practices have been assumed to play a central role in health. Religious leaders were often also seen as healers, or at least mediums through whom healing might come. The 20th century particularly saw a separation between the practice of medicine and spiritual/religious beliefs and practices. Harold G. Koenig's book *Spirituality In Patient Care: Why, How, When, and What* addresses this gap and argues for the inclusion of patient's religious and spiritual life as an essential element in "patient-centered medicine" (8). He makes use of volumes of research data to demonstrate the value of religiosity to health, and the importance of health professionals addressing this aspect of their patients' lives. The book outlines, as the title suggests, the why, how, when and what of including the spirituality of the patient in the treatment conversation and plan. He then proceeds to discuss some risks - i.e. some ways that religious and spiritual beliefs and practices might be problematic, and how do address these. One example is the notion that illness or suffering is somehow "God's will" which might dispose a patient to resist treatment or might interfere with that patient's openness and capacity for healing (108). He outlines professional boundaries for health professionals, and then spends a chapter on each of the following disciplines and how they might address spirituality in patient care: Chaplains and Pastoral Care; Nursing; Social Work; Rehabilitation; Mental Health. His final two main chapters are spent outlining a model curriculum for including religion and spirituality in medical training, followed by an overview of beliefs and practice found in world religions. These chapters are helpful not only for medical schools but particularly for staff development and inservice training in medical facilities. Ongoing conversation is needed to develop the ability of all health practitioners to address these issues effectively with patients and their families. The failure to do so can hinder the ability of patients to develop a relationship of trust with their medical team and to make full use of these resources for their progress toward wholeness. I highly recommend this book for medical practitioners as well as clergy and other religious professionals and lay leaders who function in healthcare settings or interact regularly with people in matters of their health. Below are links to chapter summary notes for use in a book club or other study.

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By S. Cara Lucille Garofalo

Great for those in various health care professions as a guide in providing spiritual care. Very concise yet comprehensive and easily read.

This book is intended as a guide for practicing physicians, medical students, and residents to help identify and address the spiritual needs of patients. Those who will benefit most will be physicians who wish to know how to integrate spirituality into clinical practice in an effective and sensitive manner. Other professionals, such as nurses and chaplains, may use this book as they interact with doctors, other health professionals, and hospital administrators.

About the Author

Harold G. Koenig, MD, is board certified in general psychiatry, geriatric psychiatry, and geriatric medicine. He is on the faculty at Duke as professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and associate professor of medicine. Dr. Koenig is Director of Duke's Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health and has published extensively in the fields of mental health, geriatrics, and religion, with over 350 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters and close to 40 books in print or in preparation. He is also a registered nurse.