

**Basic Certificate in Palliative Care**  
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**Week-04**  
**Lecture 04: Spiritual Distress**

Good evening, I am Radhakrishnan Menon.

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**6th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SPIRITUALITY AND PSYCHOLOGY [ICSP2021] 10th-16th OF MARCH 2021 VIRTUAL**

**SPEAKER**  
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**Spiritual distress and Palliative Care**

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[www.spirituality-conference.org](http://www.spirituality-conference.org) [spiritualityconference](https://www.facebook.com/spiritualityconference) [spiritualityconference](https://www.instagram.com/spiritualityconference)

I am presenting here the session prepared by Dr. Piyush Gupta, Secretary National Association of Palliative Care for Ayush and Integrative Medicine and Chief Executive Officer, Cancer Aid Society on Spiritual Distress and Palliative Care.

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**Severe pain whether it is mental or physical, shatters the person, leading to unexpected / violent actions towards self / others, which can easily be addressed through Palliative Care.**

**Palliative Care is holistic addressing of**

- **Physical**
- **Psychological**
- **Social**
- **Spiritual components**

Severe pain, what is spiritual distress? Severe pain whether it is mental or physical, shatters a person leading to unexpected or violent actions towards self or others which can easily be addressed through palliative care. Palliative care is holistic addressing of physical, psychological, social and spiritual components.

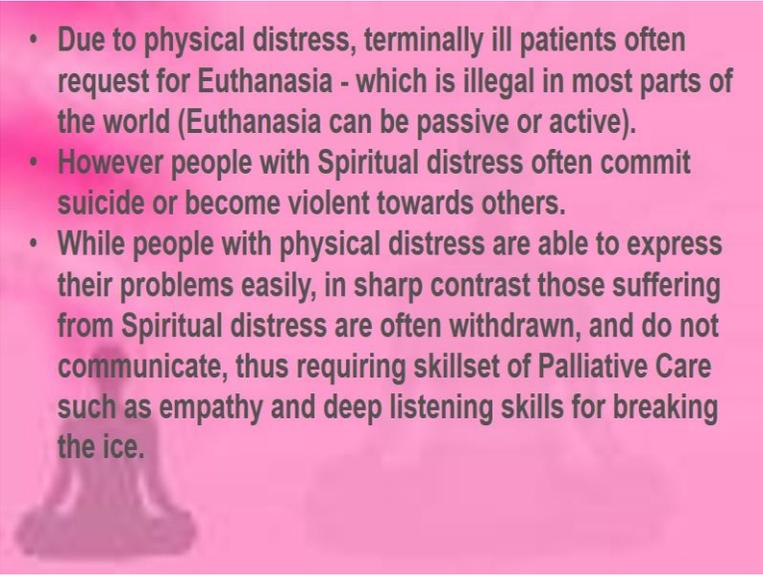
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- **COVID19 Pandemic unleashed terror across the Globe causing severe mental stress necessitating Palliative Interventions.**
- **In spite of decreased mortality due to other diseases, quality of life deteriorated globally.**
- **During lockdown, majority of people suffered from Spiritual distress although they had plenty of time for performing religious obligations.**
- **Thus we can interpret that Spiritual distress may not only be the manifestation of religion alone but it is much more complex where the physical, social, emotional and psychological factors are also interlinked.**

COVID-19 pandemic unleashed terror across the globe causing severe mental stress necessitating palliative care interventions.

In spite of decreased mortality due to other diseases, quality of life deteriorated globally. During lockdown, majority of people suffered from spiritual distress although they had plenty of time for performing religious obligations. This we can interpret that spiritual distress may not only be the manifestation of religion alone but it is much more complex where the physical, social, emotional and psychological factors are also interlinked.

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- Due to physical distress, terminally ill patients often request for Euthanasia - which is illegal in most parts of the world (Euthanasia can be passive or active).
  - However people with Spiritual distress often commit suicide or become violent towards others.
  - While people with physical distress are able to express their problems easily, in sharp contrast those suffering from Spiritual distress are often withdrawn, and do not communicate, thus requiring skillset of Palliative Care such as empathy and deep listening skills for breaking the ice.

Due to physical distress terminally ill patients often request for euthanasia which is illegal in most parts of the world.

Euthanasia can be passive or active. However, people with spiritual distress often commit suicide or become violent towards others. While people with physical distress are able to express their problems easily in sharp contrast to those suffering from spiritual distress are often withdrawn and do not communicate thus requiring skill set of palliative care such as empathy and deep listening skills for breaking the ice.

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## What is Spiritual distress?

**Spiritual distress** is “the impaired ability to experience and integrate, **meaning and purpose of life** through connectedness with self, others, art, music, literature, nature, and/ or a power greater than oneself.

**Cause of Spiritual distress** are existential concerns, grief and loss, and isolation.

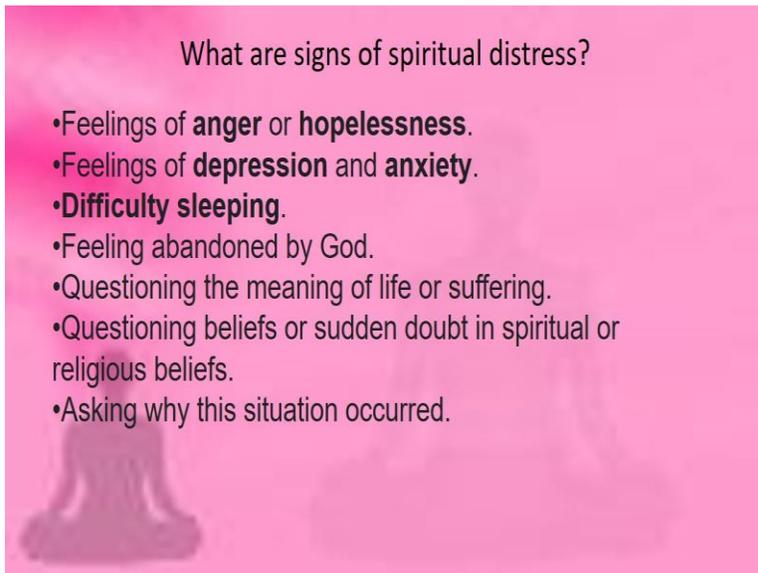


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## What are signs of spiritual distress?

- Feelings of **anger** or **hopelessness**.
- Feelings of **depression** and **anxiety**.
- Difficulty sleeping**.
- Feeling abandoned by God.
- Questioning the meaning of life or suffering.
- Questioning beliefs or sudden doubt in spiritual or religious beliefs.
- Asking why this situation occurred.



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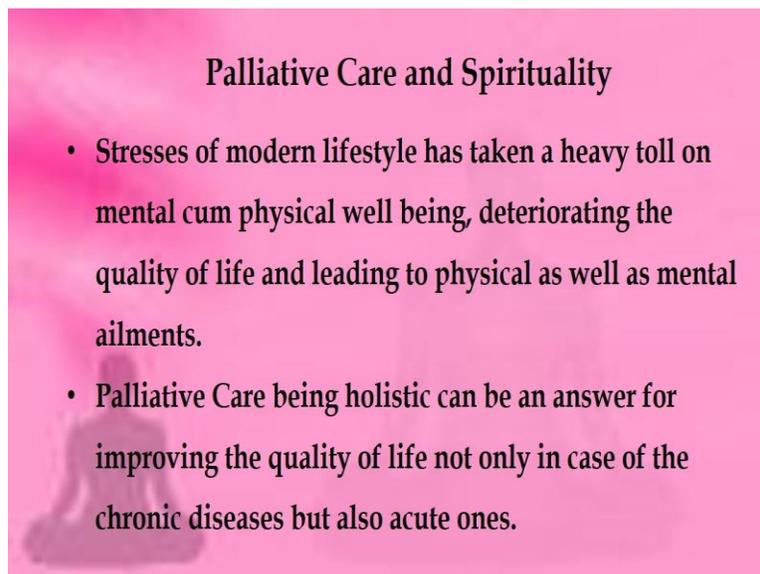
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What are spiritual needs? Human spiritual needs include love, faith, hope, virtue, beauty and spiritual suffering is experienced when these needs are unfulfilled. Spiritual care involves assisting in the fulfillment of these needs.

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Palliative care and spirituality. Stresses of modern lifestyle has taken a heavy toll on mental and physical well-being, deteriorating the quality of life and leading to physical as well as mental ailments.

Palliative care is being holistic can be an answer for improving the quality of life not only in case of the chronic diseases but also acute ones.

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Spirituality deals with enlightening one's thoughts, emotions and intrinsic tendencies. It is the most evolved and comprehensive science of psychological, sociological, moral development and path towards ultimate progress. It brightens the intellect together with inculcation of sensitivity towards fellow beings and towards the grace of nature.

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The universe comes out of the union of two fundamental forces:

1. Matter (jada - that which gives shape or prakrati - the manifested form)
2. Consciousness (chetan or purusha - the invisible enlivening spirit)

Both have merits when considered in isolation; however the union and co-operation of these two entities works wonders.

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- "Spiritual Care should be fully utilized as a resource in provision of clinical care, education of future healthcare leaders & advancement of the science as well as practice of medicine".
- It's integration shall lead to effective delivery of holistic Health Care including Palliative Care within the community.

Spiritual care should be fully utilized as a resource in provision of clinical care, education of future healthcare, leaders, and advancement of the science as well as practice of

medicine. Its integration shall lead to effective delivery of holistic healthcare including palliative care within the community.

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It's about integrating patient's spiritual beliefs into their care, addressing sensitive medical issues facing seriously ill patients and supporting healthcare professionals in their provision of compassionate care. Spiritual care gives motivation to provide compassionate care that is sensitive to types of emotional and mental distress that accompany mental illness. During illness it becomes important to understand how the relationship works.

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The application of spiritual principles is emphasized in ten-step programs:

- 1) Acceptance
- 2) Open-Mindedness
- 3) Gratitude
- 4) Humility
- 5) Patience
- 6) Integrity
- 7) Faith
- 8) Forgiveness
- 9) Self-acceptance
- 10) Service

The application of spiritual principles is emphasized in ten-step programs, acceptance, open-mindedness, gratitude, humility, patience, integrity, faith, forgiveness, self-acceptance, and service.

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#### Relationship between religion and spirituality:

- While spirituality may incorporate elements of religion, it is generally a broader concept.
- Religion and spirituality are not the same thing, nor are they entirely distinct from one another.
- Religion is one of the gateway / mode of transportation to Spirituality.

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the same thing, nor are they entirely distinct from one another. Religion is one of the great way or mode of transportation to spirituality.

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Where do I find meaning? How do I feel connected? How should I live? These are some forms based on spirituality and what practices, rights, or rituals should I follow? What is right and wrong? What is true and false? Those from the religious concept, belief, comfort, reflection, ethics.

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## Role of Spirituality in Palliative Care:

### What is Palliative Care?

Care beyond cure improving the Quality of Life & Death

### Palliative Care has four components:

1. Physical (Pain)
2. Psychological
3. Social
4. Spiritual (need to be focused)

Role of spirituality in palliative care. What is palliative care? Care beyond cure, improving the quality of life and death. Palliative care has four components as was explained earlier, physical pain, psychological, social and spiritual need to be focused.

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While improving Quality of Life, it is high time when we start discussing and addressing quality of death as very often aged people and terminally ill patients often die a miserable death in between the machines and the family has to pay an exorbitant cost of death.

Can we do something to improve the quality of death which is natural, at their home and with their near and dear one's?

Look into the eye's of such patients and you will get a silent answer.

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we do something to improve the quality of death which is natural at their home and with their near and dear ones? Look into the eyes of such patients and you will get a silent answer.

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- Cancer Aid Society organized a National Conference on Role of Spirituality in Palliative Care on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2016, inaugurated by His Excellency The Governor of Uttar Pradesh.
- Target audience were Palliative Care Professionals, Psychologist, Sociologist, Medicos & Volunteers.
- Subsequently a vast group of people forming good network to spread the evidence based Scientific Spirituality was formed.
- In 2017 a National Conference was organized for integration of tradition medicines AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha & Homeopathy).
- Members of this group have formed an Ethics Committee so as to facilitate Clinical Trials.

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These are photographs on the various programs organized by Cancer Aid Society.

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We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, we are spiritual beings having a human experience. Thank you.