Abstract

Aim and objectives
1. To trace the evolution of a clinically derived guiding definition for spirituality
2. To introduce the holistic Dark Night contemplative model for spiritual assessment and illustrate its use through case study application.

Description of innovation
The Dark Night Model may be best described in the words of a nursing student trained in its use:
(the author) uses a multidimensional approach by looking at a number of ways spirituality is expressed in life (i.e. with self, others, Other). [It] is a holistic model for spirituality... The real strength of this model lies in the ability to use it to assess spirituality whether a person identifies themselves as religious or not. A strength of this model is that it can be used in any setting (i.e. community, hospital, assisted living). Extensive training is not needed to be able to use the model. (Masters student, paper submitted in graduate course: Spiritual Assessment in The Promotion of Health INTD577, University of ..., City, Province, August 20, 2012), 10-11.

Impact of innovation
The Dark Night contemplative spiritual assessment model has had educational, clinical, and systems transformational impacts:

Educational Impact
• Proven versatility in medical, nursing and inter-disciplinary education in spirituality.
• Teaching of educational format resulted in the development of a Dark Night Spiritual Assessment Tool.

Clinical Practice Innovation
• uses an accessible language to express spiritual dimensions of living and is flexible enough to hold space for any expression of spirituality.
• has been selected by several students for trialing in nursing practice and guided professional spiritual care practice.
• is equally versatile within public and faith-based healthcare.

Systems Transformation Impact
• informed systems transformation efforts in spiritual health care across the nation's largest integrated health care system: provision of guiding language and a framework for development of standardized spiritual assessment within the clinical information system.

Conclusions and implications
The development of the Dark Night contemplative model for spiritual assessment is a product of practical theology. It has the potential to support collaborative practice in spiritual health care through innovative curriculum development, education, and research by interdisciplinary spiritual health partners.