

Letter to the Editor

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A commentary on “Spirituality is ‘sometimes just a hug’: A conceptual analysis from the perspective of nursing students” (Piret Paal et al, 2023)

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Dear Editor,

We have carefully read the article recently published entitled “Spirituality is ‘sometimes just a hug’: A conceptual analysis from the perspective of nursing students” (Paal et al. 2023). The authors state that this conceptual analysis aimed to explore the understanding of spirituality by German-speaking nurses in an educational context.

The importance of spirituality in quality of life, health, and well-being is unquestionable. The International Council of Nursing and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) stress integrating spirituality as an essential aspect of care and emphasize assessing and respecting the spiritual beliefs of patients and their families in the healthcare setting (Lalani 2020). These underline the need for spiritual care delivered by nurses; however, nurses should be able to provide spiritual care and address patients’ spiritual needs. Reluctance to provide spiritual care may be due to nurses lacking insight into their own spirituality (Govier 2000). Several barriers have been identified for this, including the lack of a unified definition of spirituality and the lack of training on the subject (Green et al. 2020). The EPICC project network has been conducted to respond effectively and consensually to this need, seeking precise terminology that simultaneously respects the individuality and context of each nursing student (Ross et al. 2022; Van Leeuwen et al. 2021). As so, the findings in this study (Paal et al. 2023) are similar to those in other studies in this field, concerning that nurses feel unprepared to provide spiritual care and feel the desire to be better trained and skilled (Cooper et al. 2013; Lewinson et al. 2015). As researchers, we need to know the importance of the spiritual dimension, how to identify patient spiritual needs, and how to include it in the nursing curricula. Interestingly main studies have been conducted with nursing students, but we need to further explore the understanding of spirituality among teachers on undergraduate nursing degree and the processes of learning.

Interestingly, spirituality is connected to experience, and if this is an opportunity for an individual approach, on the other hand, it increases the sense of subjectivity related to the understanding by nursing students and nurses.

Paal et al. (2023) analysis suggests the need for understanding the opportunity for nurses to verbalize what spirituality means in their lives for an effective inclusion of spirituality in teaching and clinical practice. It seems that this study not only brings us extremely relevant results but also leads us to reflect on future research concerning spirituality and education in undergraduate nursing degrees.

Competing interests. The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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