

## THE JANKI FOUNDATION:

### A VALUES APPROACH TO SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH

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*Abstract : The Janki foundation is a UK based charity focusing on spirituality and health. Its modular training programme 'Values in Healthcare – a spiritual approach' explores healthcare professionals' understanding of spirituality and personal values, and how these relate to their professional lives. Such an approach promotes self awareness and examination of core values, and helps combat the stress and low self worth which can affect HCPs. The Janki foundation holds that spiritual values are at the centre of healthcare, and affirms that the development of a values based culture within healthcare has transformative potential*

*Keywords : Janki Foundation; spirituality; spiritual values; values in healthcare*

From the Scottish Executive's perspective, spiritual care has become an important aspect to be integrated within the provision of holistic healthcare (SEHD, 2002). This requires NHS Scotland to have a clear understanding of spirituality and to be fully committed to the inclusion of spiritual care (Levison, 2002).

Whilst a growing body of literature within health and chaplaincy journals has sought to define spirituality and what constitutes spiritual care, there has been a limited focus on the education and training of healthcare professionals to facilitate understanding of their own spirituality and values.

With the growing emphasis on meeting the spiritual needs of patients as part of a person-centred approach to healthcare, practitioners should also be encouraged to become self-aware and address their own spiritual needs. True holism can only occur when both parties, the patient and the practitioner, meet at a level of respect and understanding.

#### **The Janki Foundation**

The Janki Foundation for Global Healthcare is a UK-based charity which encourages research and awareness in the field of spirituality and health. It is dedicated to positive human development and

whole-person care. Its aim is to provide an educational forum for healthcare professionals, in which to examine how a spiritual model of healthcare can complement current working practices.

The Janki Foundation has developed a modular training and resource package, '*Values in Healthcare – a spiritual approach*', to help health professionals take a renewed values-based approach to their learning and practice. Through experiential exercises and opportunities for self-enquiry, the programme enables healthcare professionals and teams to complement their training with improved interactive and reflective skills. The insights obtained enhance both personal and working lives.

#### **Current challenges within Healthcare**

Over recent years there has been a decline in the morale of healthcare and related professions, often expressed as a feeling of not being valued as professionals, and of being worn out by the chronic shortages and challenges in meeting the needs of others. When this becomes a chronic state, professionals experience 'burnout' (Brown, 2003). Burnout is a state of physical, emotional and mental fatigue caused by long-term involvement in situations that are emotionally exhausting (Pines, 1988).

Much of the work of healthcare practitioners is stressful, particularly when repeatedly supporting patients at times of crisis in their lives. This can leave us exhausted at all levels - physical, psychological and spiritual. We are expected to, and want to be, compassionate, yet this cumulative exposure can take its toll on our own well-being.

Doctors exhibit higher levels of psychological stress than people found in equivalent professional occupations. Health problems range from anxiety through to emotional exhaustion, clinical depression, substance misuse, and suicide ( Williams, 1998).

The British Medical Association's working group on the misuse of alcohol and other drugs reported that, in a lifetime, about one in 15 doctors in the UK may suffer some form of dependence on alcohol or other drugs (BMA, 1998).

Among healthcare professionals, nurses are considered to be particularly susceptible to burnout. Their jobs are typically stressful and emotionally demanding because of their front-line engagement with people's needs, problems and suffering (Baker, 2000).

Given the demands of current healthcare delivery and the needs of health professionals, attention is required as to how best support professionals to address this gap between the requirements of their patients and caring for their own needs. This apparent dichotomy has created an environment and working practices within which professionals often feel disempowered and dispirited.

A conceptual reorientation is needed, which puts the health professional at the centre of healthcare delivery rather than focusing primarily on the patient. Values-based self-care enables professionals to cope better with stress, raises morale and restores a sense of purpose in professional life. Ultimately, this benefits the patient through the establishment of a supportive and healing environment based on values such as peace, positivity, respect and understanding.

### **A values-based approach**

In times of low morale and burnout it is important to return to the values that formed the foundations of healthcare practice. In 2000 the Janki Foundation sought to explore these questions. A multi-

disciplinary team concluded that these issues were essentially spiritual, and that healthcare professionals needed to rediscover meaning and purpose in their work by revisiting those values that inspired them to work in the caring professions such as peace, positivity, co-operation and compassion. The outcome of this enquiry was the development of an educational programme to explore values using an innovative spiritual approach (Brown, 2003). The programme is based on the understanding that for values to be meaningful, they must be owned at a personal level, for them to be integrated into the workplace.

*Values in Healthcare* addresses a missing link in the education of many healthcare professionals, whose training traditionally focuses mainly on acquiring knowledge and learning practical skills, with much less emphasis on interpersonal competence and on 'looking after ourselves'. With this in mind the Janki Foundation adopted three key principles for the values programme:

Professional caregivers should be placed at the centre of healthcare delivery, by adopting the concept of 'Physician heal thyself'.

Values are best understood through facilitated, experiential learning, rather than didactic instruction, with time for contemplation and sharing in a supportive environment.

The learning experience should be relevant to the participants' work and life, with an emphasis on reflection, action planning, evaluation and a commitment to ongoing learning.

### **A spiritual approach**

The *Values in Healthcare* programme has a distinctive style of training, guiding participants to the experience of core values. These are brought into awareness, identified and subsequently expressed on a conscious level in personal and work situations. The experience is unique to each participant, though sharing within groups or teams leads to a common understanding and enhanced clarity with regard to a values-based practice. This is what is meant by 'a spiritual approach'.

## The tools

The *Values in Healthcare* programme introduces seven tools for learning, which facilitate reflection and the application of the gained insights into everyday challenges and situations.

**Meditation** requires participants to be silent and to learn about their mind and thoughts. By practising positive and peaceful thoughts, the mind becomes quiet and awareness moves towards the silent centre of consciousness. The calmness experienced can be recalled in stressful situations, enabling the practitioner to maintain stability, strength and focus.

**Visualisation** involves using the mind to create positive images which can help to address past negative experiences and feelings of failure or frustration. Visualisation helps participants to develop self-respect and positive attitudes.

**Reflection** is a tool used in 'Reflective Practice' and involves learning from past experience to reflect on professional progress, evaluate concerns and improve clinical practice. The spiritual approach to reflection requires participants to take a detached view of themselves and understand emotional reactions and their consequences. When we observe ourselves from a place of peace and tranquillity, we are better able to recognize and release feelings of anger and anxiety. This then enables us to learn from our mistakes and to build on positive experiences.

**Listening** is an essential skill in healthcare. The way of *how* we listen can bring benefit, not only to those being listened to, but to the listener himself. Listening as a spiritual tool requires participants to reconnect with their innate values of peace and compassion and then, to focus on what the person is saying, with an open heart and without judgement.

**Appreciation** means to welcome and understand the diversity and uniqueness of others. As a spiritual skill, it looks at individuals, valuing what works best, drawing on existing skills and shared values, seeking solutions, rather than focusing on problems and apportioning blame.

In healthcare the emphasis is often on developing a critical attitude. While this is essential in the technical side of medical care, practising appreciation can

help participants to recognise the value of the human contribution and to encourage co-operation between colleagues and within teams.

**Creativity** encourages the discovery of new solutions. As a spiritual skill it emphasises the premise that ideas come to us when we give ourselves silent space and drop our preconceptions. As part of the *Values in Healthcare* programme, participants are encouraged to experience creativity through drawing, writing poetry and visualisation to experiment and explore values in creative ways. The sessions may involve taking risks by behaving outside normal roles; however, the insight gained from the creative process and its application to problem solving will be a positive learning outcome.

**Playfulness** introduces the idea that it is legitimate to experience fun and laughter as part of the learning process. To be playful means to be spontaneous and carefree, with a willingness to let go of barriers and overcome difficulties. While participants may feel inhibited at first, the playing of simple games can be a moving experience, connecting people at a deeper level and allowing everyone to 'just be themselves'. Having a sense of 'lightness' encourages tolerance in our listening and softness in our judgements.

The seven tools are introduced and applied throughout the programme and can become valuable resources for participants to take into everyday living and healthcare practice. (The Janki Foundation for Global Healthcare, 2004)

## The Values in Healthcare Programme

*Values in Healthcare* comprises seven modules, which will help healthcare professionals and teams explore values in depth, as they relate to their personal lives and professional practice:

- Module 1: **Values** *Inner values* and *Values at work*
- Module 2: **Peace** *Being peaceful* and *Peace at work*
- Module 3: **Positivity** *Being positive* and *Positive inter-action at work*
- Module 4: **Compassion** *Finding compassion* and *Compassion in practice*
- Module 5: **Co-operation** *Understanding Co-operation* and *Working in teams*

Module 6: **Valuing yourself** *Self-care and Self-esteem*

Module 7: **Spirituality in healthcare** *Exploring spirituality and healing and spiritual care in practice.*

Each module comprises of two half-day sessions, containing a mix of learning activities guided by a facilitator. The modules and sessions can be run as stand-alone workshops, incorporated into development programmes, or run in sequence as a **Values in Healthcare** programme. The materials can also be used for self-study. (The Janki Foundation for Global Healthcare, 2004)

### The story so far

The **Values in Healthcare – a spiritual approach** programme was piloted in several hospitals in the UK and abroad (Kenya, USA, Brazil, India, Holland, Italy and others) before being released through a formal launch of the pack on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2004 at King's College, Waterloo Campus, in London. It is now available for healthcare professionals to use in their practice.

The aim is to incorporate the **Values in Healthcare – a spiritual approach** programme into formal education, both undergraduate and postgraduate, as the pack lends itself as a tool for lifelong learning and continuing professional development (CPD). Attention has been given to its relevance to work within healthcare, offering clear aims and objectives, evaluation and learning logs. It will be an invaluable tool to revisit at different stages in one's career, gaining depth and further understanding as one is presented with new situations and challenges.

The training pack is relevant to all healthcare professionals, be they doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, supportive staff and those directly involved in the delivery of spiritual care. Since they are all part of the team caring for patients and relatives, their practice will be enhanced as they receive spiritual support in doing so.

### Discussion

Developing a culture based on values has the potential to transform the atmosphere of dis-ease felt in healthcare by being open and receptive to values

such as respect and co-operation within the workplace.

To practise whole-person care the practitioner has to be supported and valued. One of the principles of holism is that we are all connected. It follows that if you are compassionate towards yourself, you will be better able to be compassionate towards your patients (McMullen, 2003).

It is about putting back into healthcare practice the holistic essence of the 'vocation to care'. Over-reductionist and mechanistic attitudes have brought about a growing 'malaise' and tiredness among healthcare professionals. Unless we bring about change, the healthcare system is in danger of crumbling from the neglect of the 'spirit of caring'.

The 'spirit of caring' must begin by supporting staff, allowing them to work creatively within the framework of best practice, and valuing them for their efforts, thus developing a culture of appreciation and humanity.

Rev. David Mitchell, lecturer in palliative care at the Marie Curie Hospice in Glasgow, has drawn attention to the fact that 15-20% of a chaplain's time is spent supporting patients, whilst a greater percentage of their time, 40-50%, is spent in the support of staff (Provision of Spiritual Care Scoping Study Group Seminar, Airth Castle, Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2005).

This indicates that there is a deeper spiritual need within the workforce, that is unmet, and requires that we reflect and consider the implications of this 'malaise' within staff. Dadi Janki, President of the Janki Foundation, has stated (2000): "When we allow ourselves to be influenced strongly by human situations – whether we are being praised or criticised, or whether we feel victorious or defeated – excessive emotional reactions bring illness. Spiritual awareness allows a person to have a state of stability without such fluctuations." An awareness and practice of values can bring meaning and purpose to our vocation and make us more resilient, satisfied and stable.

Phil Hanlon, Professor of Public Health at Glasgow University, posed the following questions at a recent conference in Edinburgh ("First International Allied

Health Professionals Conference on Health Improvement", 9 June 2005):

What do you feel passionate about in your profession?

What do you want to change?

What motivates you?

How can you exercise this motivation in the service of others?

In essence these questions encourage us to reconsider the values that reflect our professional integrity and competence, and how these can be best developed and practised. Small changes in how we practise values, such as listening to others and appreciating them, have the potential to influence organisational change by creating a different attitude and mindset within healthcare.

*Values in Healthcare* is a comprehensive training programme that addresses these aspects by giving practitioners a framework to explore and practise values creatively and spiritual tools with which to craft permanent changes.

#### **Why values?**

Respect for the self involves recognition of our own values and worth. Self-respect includes the experience of peace within ourselves. This peace rekindles awareness and acceptance of our highest qualities as human beings, and helps to remove negative attitudes and habits. In difficult circumstances, our main resource is recognition of these inner qualities that we can draw on. They enable us to make decisions with a combination of self-confidence and humility. When we are calm and peaceful, we are much better able to explore the roles we take on in life and understand our inner values.

Values can be said to underpin everything we do and say in our work and life as healthcare professionals. If we lose sight of them, we begin to experience a loss of meaning in what we do and who we are, leading to a diminished sense of self-esteem. Our work suffers, and we too suffer, both at work and also, inevitably, in our personal lives. The demands faced by healthcare professionals can easily cause us to lose our 'joie de vivre'. By consciously setting out to rediscover and strengthen our values, we can renew and strengthen confidence. Our values, after all, are the reasons we were drawn to work in the caring profession in the first place.

## **Summary**

*Values in Healthcare* helps healthcare organisations and practitioners at four levels: professional, personal, organisational and educational. The programme provides opportunities to:

### **Professional**

- Set professional standards and codes of practice
- Help resolve ethical issues
- Manage workload, expectations and change more effectively
- Work in teams with better co-operation
- Improve the quality of relationships and communication at all levels

### **Personal**

- Build self-esteem
- Renew enthusiasm and vitality
- Consider self-care as essential to well-being and good patient care
- Cope better with stress and prevent burnout and ill health

### **Organisational**

- Improve staff recruitment and retention
- Provide better staff support
- Boost morale in the workforce and reduce sickness absence
- Enhance performance and cost efficiency
- Introduce positive, values-based change into healthcare environments

### **Educational**

- Introduce a holistic educational programme
- Provide opportunities for learning new caring skills
- Enhance reflective practice and personal development plans
- Develop a spiritual approach to personal and professional development

(The Janki Foundation for Global Healthcare, 2004)

## **Conclusion**

Health care professionals are much more than technicians fixing bodies. Patients look at us for spiritual guidance and qualities such as compassion, understanding and hope. When healthcare professionals

are able to express these qualities in their interactions with patients, both parties feel more fulfilled.

Through constant interaction with large numbers of needy people, doctors, nurses and allied health professionals are particularly prone to becoming spiritually as well as physically drained. The experience of values within a multidisciplinary team will bring meaning, clarity and insight into working lives, raise morale and create a positive and spiritually enriched working environment. Healthcare can then be said to have fulfilled its life-enhancing and supporting purpose.

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