PARTICULARITY
A Characteristic of Spiritual Care
Individualized for the Patient

Jennifer W. Paquette, DMin, BCC
Director, Mission Services

Particularity

Defined

• Merriam Webster defines it as
  – a minute detail,
  – an individual characteristic,
  – quality or state of being particular, as distinguished from universal

• First known use in 1528!

Particularity

God is the most particular, the most unique, yet He is everything.
He is all we are and all we are not.
Particularity

Discovering the Particular

Particularity Applied

Society looks for ways to distinguish one person from another

• Crime scene
  – What distinguishes the perpetrator...DNA
  – Characteristics of the crime
• Employers seek to secure sensitive research or manufacturing processes
  – Employee access cards with special codes imbedded
  – Retinal scans

Particularity Applied

Society looks for ways to distinguish one person from another

• Geneology
  – Discovering biological roots
    o Adopted individuals
    o Twins...or not
    o Ancestry
Particularity Applied

Society looks for ways to distinguish one person from another

• Health Care
  – Blood typing
  – Oncologists specify the cancer type in order to target the therapy
  – Gene Mapping
    o Discovering rare inherited diseases
    o Discovering genes which interact causing other diseases (cancer, psychological)
  – Organ donation

Particularity

Standardization in Health Care

• Economies of Scale
  – Normalizes quality
  – Easier to train around one standard
  – Lower cost for higher volumes
  – Absorbs variants, where needed
  – Does not diminish the need for “particularity”

Particularity

• Those who deliver health care have heard, loud and clear, that they must serve the patients particularly, not just in a gross sense.
• At the same time, standardization is a hallmark of the delivery system.
• Where does pastoral care operate?
Particularity

“Delivering personalized . . . Patient-centered care.”

• Two people:
  – Audrey is logic focused, questioning, results oriented, and has a sense of urgency
    VS
  – Kathryn, is people focused, accepting, receptive, optimistic

Particularity

“Delivering personalized . . . Patient-centered care.”

How would you know that you had received “personalized . . . Patient-centered care,” particular to you?
• What would make it particular?
• What would distinguish the care?

Particularity

• How would life be different for the patients, if we understood what made each particular? How would this impact the patient experience?

• Heard from a patient, “I want you to know me.”
Particularity

- Heard on a recent conference call.
  - Difficult situation with a patient was presented.
  - 10+ possible solutions offered by the participants over the 1.5 hours discussion.
  - Not one question was asked to discover the uniqueness of the patient. No one seemed interested in the problem from the patient’s perspective.
  - By contrast, there was considerable energy expended on type-casting the patient, making her like others.

Particularity

“Actually, it is the crime humans consider the greatest and which they punish most cruelly, that of not being like others. . . . In respect of what characterizes the human, each is meant on the contrary not to be like the others, to have its peculiarity.”

Soren Kierkegaard
Papers and Journals: A Selection, p 311

Particularity Considerations

- What would we see if we could see the patient as she wishes to be known?
- Would it make a difference in our delivery of pastoral care?

“Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eyes for an instant?”

Henry David Thoreau
Discovering the Particular

• What’s in a Name? Everything!
  ▪ Our name is the first characteristic we learn that distinguishes us from others in the family.
  ▪ To ask the patient
    o How do you wish to be called? What name do you prefer?
    o Do you know the meaning of your name?
    o That is a beautiful name! Were you named for anyone? In the family?
    o How are you like or unlike that person?
    o Why did you choose that name? (If they are using something other than their given name.) What meaning does it have for you?

Discovering the Particular

• Groups that demonstrate our particularity
  ▪ The Family? No choice!
  ▪ Shared vs unique traits
  ▪ To ask the patient
    o How are you like/unlike your sister/brother/mother/father?
    o Who was your favorite relative? Why? What did you admire most? Is that like you?
    o Who are you closest to in the family? Why?
    o What is a trait of your father/mother that you most admire? Does that describe you?

Discovering the Particular

• The Power of Others
  ▪ We discover our uniqueness through others
  ▪ What is learned may be incongruent with the “self” we know
    ▪ Examples: Chronic illness, disease, EOL
  ▪ To ask the patient
    o What is the meaning to who you are as a person in the knowing of this disease?
    o How will it change what is important to you?
    o Has the knowing of the disease changed your relationships with people important to you?
Discovering the Particular

“Will I survive? Who will give a damn, if no one knows who I am.”

*Jekyll & Hyde: The Musical*
*Sung by Linda Eder, Music by Frank Wildhorn*

Discovering the Particular

• Events, the impacts of our lives!
  • We choose the events in which to invest ourselves, because they speak to who we are. They define our particularity.
    • Examples: Birth of a child, a beautiful sunset
    • To ask the patient
      o Name a meaningful event from your life? Who were you in the midst of the event?
      o Have you experienced other events, perhaps different from the one mentioned, where you were aware of the same or similar understanding of yourself?
      o Old Man Reacts to Music – dementia, non-verbal yet powerfully moved in a significant event
        • [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKDXuCE7LcQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKDXuCE7LcQ)

Discovering the Particular

• Places
  • The geographic places and spaces we inhabit shape and reflect us, all at the same time

• Things
  • Some objects are more important than others, because we invest ourselves in those too.
Particularity – In Summation

• We are a story in progress
  • Shaped by and shaping people, events, places and things
• We are a myriad of change and sameness
  • The particular is in the sameness and in the becoming
• The people, places and events of our lives must be congruent with who we know ourselves to be

Particularity – In Summation

• The person of congruence and truth is before us
• Our job is to sift through the remainder and find the particularity
• We do not minister to the dignity of the human person, in the abstract or in a general way; we are called to minister to the dignity of the person in the particular

Particularity

Jennifer W. Paquette
Director, Mission Services
St. Joseph’s Hospitals
3001 West Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Blvd.
MS 3001
Tampa, FL 33607
813-357-1579
jennifer.paquette@BayCare.org