February 29, 2016
NACC Conference workshop
Summary of Study Design and Key Findings

The Palliative Care Chaplain Survey
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A. Study Aims
• Identify the involvement of palliative care chaplains in hospital palliative care programs
• Identify the demographics, practices, stresses, and self-care practices of palliative care chaplains
• Depict differences in practice between full-time and part-time palliative care chaplains

B. Methods
• Online survey, conducted in the Winter 2015
• Invitation to members of major professional chaplaincy organizations (APC, NACC, NAJC, VA Chaplains)

C. Inclusion Criteria
• At least 15% time in hospital-based palliative care

D. Participants
• 531 respondents, 382 are full-time chaplains
• Among the 382 full-time chaplains:
  o 47% were occasionally involved in palliative care (15% - 40% of time)
  o 36% were often involved in palliative care (41% - 85%)
  o 17% were frequently or always involved in palliative care (86% - 100%)

E. Summary of Study Findings (FT Chaplains, n=382)
1. The majority of chaplains (64%) have worked in palliative care (PC) for 5 yrs or less, but some (13%) have worked in PC for 11 years or more
2. A large majority of the chaplains who work in PC (83%) are part-time PC chaplains or see PC patients in their role as a ‘unit chaplain.’ A small proportion of chaplains (17%) are full-time PC chaplains
3. Among chaplains with high levels of involvement in PC (frequently/always), most participate in the PC team rounds (77%) and their patient visits are frequently initiated in response to referrals from PC team members (67%)
4. Among chaplains with high levels of involvement in PC, slightly less than half (48%) report frequent participation in family meetings
5. Among chaplains with high levels of involvement in PC, a large proportion report frequently helping patients and their loved ones discuss goals of care (70%) and facilitate communication
between the patient/family and the health care team (65%); a smaller proportion report frequently helping process family conflicts patients (41%)

6. What Wendy Cadge (2012) labels ‘death work’ is a frequent activity for chaplains: 69% of the chaplains report frequently providing care to patients who are actively dying or have just died, and their loved ones; 56% of the chaplains report frequently helping patients and their loved ones deal with impending death

7. Among all the chaplains, approximately half report they frequently help patients with existential issues or spiritual distress (49%); a smaller proportion report frequently helping with specific types of spiritual distress (e.g., help process question about why God allows suffering, 21%).

8. The chaplains report feeling distress related to their work. Fifty-six percent reported agreeing or strongly agreeing feeling worn out because of their work in the past three months. Thirty percent reported agreeing or strongly agreeing they had existential questions such as “Why does God allow the people I serve to suffer” in the past three months. Seventeen percent reported agreeing or strongly agreeing they had thought about leaving palliative care or chaplaincy in the past three months.

9. Many chaplains report debriefing difficult cases with supervisors or colleagues.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Debrief with</th>
<th>1 or more time/month</th>
<th>1 or more times/week</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual care supervisor</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other chaplains</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palliative care staff</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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10. The chaplains report other self-care activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>1 or more times/week</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintain work/life balance</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other spiritual activities</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meditation/yoga</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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