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Innovation At Emory Spiritual Health: Compassion-Centered Spiritual Health (CCSH™)

By: [Maureen Jenci Shelton](#), ACPE Certified Educator, Director of Education, Spiritual Health at Emory Healthcare, CBCT Instructor | May 4, 2020

We at Emory Spiritual Health join the brave efforts of spiritual care departments across the globe as we offer care response in proactive and creative ways during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our staff, team of residents, CECs and CCSH fellows (who are appointed in a post-residency two year educational program focused on certification in the CCSH™ Interventional Approach), are responding to patient and family needs while ever increasing our efforts to staff support as we maintain an onsite presence in our hospitals and clinics 24/7. All those listed above have employee status with us during their educational experience. In addition to our presence, we are providing care via technology to patients who are positive with or being tested for the coronavirus. Providing avenues of connection between these patients and their families is another key aspect of our current provision of spiritual care. We are grateful for our spring and fall extended interns who are completing their clinical hours via tele-chaplaincy and we anticipate having our next intern group in the fall of 2020.



While we are offering this care, we are rigorously following guidelines for safety precautions and maintaining social distancing.

One of the innovations during this time is being offered by our Spiritual Health research team.

Our Spiritual Health and Real-time Experience (SHARE) tool is a brief daily survey delivered electronically each weekday morning. An automated weekly report delivers cumulative graphical results of burnout, depressive symptoms, and wellbeing levels. This daily emotional temperature tracker helps our spiritual health clinicians monitor their emotional health during this pandemic. We look forward to exploring how this tool may be of benefit to our team.

We are also developing a video library covering a wide variety of topics and meditations that are available for supporting healthcare workers as well as to the general public:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLDSBylqXf9oEjPrnlopWiQrHK0vT_qB4C

Another one of our innovative efforts is our engagement with Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT®) and Compassion-Centered Spiritual Health (CCSH™). All spiritual health staff, residents, CECs and CCSH fellows receive training in CBCT and CCSH. CCSH is a result of our collaboration between the Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics of Emory University and Emory Spiritual Health.

CBCT® is a research-based contemplative program designed for people of any, or no, faith tradition. It is a system of exercises designed to expand and strengthen compassion for self and others. These reflective exercises seek to support critical insight into the way mindsets and attitudes can be modified to sustain personal resiliency, to foster an inclusive and more accurate understanding of others, and ultimately to intensify compassion. The definition of compassion utilized in CBCT is, “a desire to alleviate the distress and adversity of others, arising from a sensitivity to their challenges and rooted in warm-heartedness”. For more information please visit: <https://www.compassion.emory.edu>.

CCSH™ is a program to bolster the wellbeing, resilience, and compassion of healthcare patients and staff. CCSHTM augments spiritual health education and best practices with CBCT® (Cognitively-Based Compassion Training), a program developed at the Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics at Emory University. CCSHTM interventions are delivered by spiritual care professionals trained in both CBCT® and ACPE: The Standard for Spiritual Care and Education. For more information please visit: <https://ccsh.emory.edu/>.

Over the past four years, we have developed the CCSH Interventional Approach and researched this effort over the last two years. We are hoping to have the initial results of this research available for publication soon. We have also explored whether the teaching of CBCT to ACPE trained residents helps to support their wellbeing. We recently published an article about this aspect of our research.¹

The following is a reflection from one of our past residents about their experience of CBCT, *“In particular, CBCT enabled me to understand the importance of giving myself grace for the various mistakes of my past. Because I often find myself trying to be strong for others, CBCT made me aware of my inability to emotionally allow myself to be comfortable with having “negative feelings” whenever difficult circumstances occurred in my life; feelings such as anger, anxiety, helplessness, and despair. This new spiritual realization has since released and relieved me from carrying unnecessary emotional burdens.”* This type of cultivation of inner spaciousness and the ability to offer oneself a sense of relief from unhelpful mindsets, is what CBCT hopes will enable one to offer this spaciousness to others more spontaneously.

We have also heard from residents that the utilization of the CCSH Interventional approach (built on the insights of CBCT) has been of benefit to them as they have engaged in the complexity of providing spiritual care during this time. For example, the ability to access and dwell in a moment of strengthening and nurture for the care responder (one of the skill practices of CBCT), seems to be of help as we step into chaotic and stressful situations. Accessing this felt sense of nurture and the accompanying sense of safety and security has been a resource for our spiritual health team; particularly helping to maintain stability in the moment of distress and seeing options more clearly in a crisis. One resident wrote in a CCSH reflection, *"I noticed some weariness surface part way through our encounter, I checked in with my own attention and after drawing on a nurturing moment, returned fully to the room."*

We currently have three certified CBCT® instructors at Emory Spiritual Health: me, Caroline Peacock, and Jose Montenegro. We offer 15-minute CBCT sessions daily via Zoom for our spiritual health community to foster support for wellbeing during this crisis. These calls are recorded so that they can be accessed whenever they may be needed by our team.

Through our regular work of education, service, research, and efforts arising from COVID-19, we hope to increase our resilience and wellbeing as we offer care to others during this very challenging time.

1 Ash, M.J., Walker, E.R., DiClemente, R., Florian, M.P., Palmer, P.K., Wehrmeyer, K., Negi, L.T., Grant, G., Raison, C., Mascaro, J. (2020). Compassion Meditation Training for Hospital Chaplain Residents: A Pilot Study. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, 1-16. doi: 10.1080/08854726.2020.1723189

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