

Editorial

Cognitive Science, Neuropalliative Care, Spiritual Care Taxonomy, Peer-to-Peer Staff Listening, Prayer and COVID-19 Reflections

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Abstract: This issue of Health and Social Care Chaplaincy (HSCC) carries a broad range of topics. These topics include: the exploration of cognitive science in religion-informed spiritual care, the role of chaplaincy in an interprofessional neuropalliative outpatient team, a taxonomic approach for introducing spiritual care in healthcare settings, a peer-to-peer staff listening service for acute contexts, the indirect effects of prayer on stress and life satisfaction for participants in Alcoholics Anonymous and finally the moral reorientation of healthcare chaplains during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are also several book reviews discussing LGBTQIA inclusive hospice spiritual care, mental health and Christian spirituality, and finally, creating a sacred space for story, reflection and practice in healthcare chaplaincy. The subject matter experts of these diverse topics come from numerous countries, namely, England, Ireland, Germany, Estonia, Netherlands, Poland and the United States. The editorial concludes by noting information about the inaugural Australian and New Zealand Moral Injury Conference (ANZMIC 2026).

Keywords: acute care, alcoholics anonymous, chaplaincy, moral injury, palliative care, prayer, LGBTQIA

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Introduction

This issue commences with the work of Chaplain Paul Yoon at the New York Presbyterian Hospital-Weill Cornell Medical Center, who reflects upon the utilization of the cognitive science of religion (CSR)-informed spiritual care in healthcare chaplaincy by examining key CSR concepts such as the hyper-active agency detection device (HADD), teleological reasoning, theory of mind (ToM) and the minimally counterintuitive effect (MCI-effect). Yoon considers how these frameworks may validate, normalize and assess patients' spiritual struggles. The author argues that the integration of these cognitive insights can lead to more empathetic and scientifically informed spiritual care during health crises and honour the spiritual dimensions of patients' lives and improve their overall health and resilience (Yoon, 2025a).

Palliative Care

Sarah Bublitz and colleagues undertake a qualitative study to explore the role of chaplaincy in an interprofessional neuropalliative outpatient team and argue that the chaplain should be integrated as part of the team and not just a component that is brought in occasionally. The authors note that the chaplain contributed to team development, spiritual care delivery and the cultivation of workplace spirituality and identified four main themes: (1) positive perception of chaplaincy in the team; (2) chaplains as impulse givers; (3) chaplaincy works on multiple levels; and (4) challenges and learning needs. Based on their results, a theoretical competency framework for chaplains in outpatient care settings is proposed, addressing both patient-facing and team-oriented dimensions of care. Their research offers insights from a Central European context, highlighting chaplaincy's evolving role in dynamic and collaborative healthcare environments (Bublitz et al., 2025).

Taxonomic Approach to Spiritual Care

A second article by Paul Yoon offers a taxonomic approach to introducing spiritual care in healthcare settings. Yoon proposes a taxonomy of individual spirituality that moves beyond dichotomous thinking of religion and spirituality, offering a framework for understanding spirituality as a dynamic, multifaceted aspect of human life. This taxonomy identifies three key dimensions: prescriptive and descriptive characteristics, communal and individual practices, and finally vertical and horizontal transcendence. Each dimension functions as a spectrum, allowing chaplains to assess and address the unique

spiritual needs of patients based on their lived experiences during health crises (Yoon, 2025b).

P2P Staff Listening Service

Sarah Crane and Daniel Nuzum combine resources to describe the establishment and ongoing sustaining of a chaplaincy-led peer-to-peer (P2P) listening service in an acute National Health Service Trust in the United Kingdom. It considers the value of compassionate listening within the context of loneliness evidenced in the general population and the documented occupational burden of working in the health service. The P2P service has had 6,771 interventions with staff, with 34% being primarily work-related. Recommendations are made for a dedicated team to lead a new service such as this and the positive impact of P2P listening for healthcare staff wellbeing (Crane & Nuzum, 2025).

Prayer and Alcoholics Anonymous

Marcin Wnuk from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, aimed to verify the underlying mechanism of the relationship between prayer as an antecedent of God's support and life satisfaction and the role of hope and stress for AA participants. In this cross-sectional study involving 115 individuals from Poland attending AA meetings, the mechanisms underlying the link between prayer and life satisfaction were confirmed. Prayer was found to be both directly and indirectly associated with life satisfaction. Prayer, as a positive antecedent of God's support, was also indirectly related to hope, which in turn correlated directly and positively with both life satisfaction and satisfaction with different domains of life and indirectly through stress. The author argues that prayer should be used as an essential factor for both religiously committed and religiously skeptical individuals addicted to alcohol to improve their life satisfaction by shaping hope and effectively managing stress (Wnuk, 2025).

Moral Reorientations and COVID-19

Wendy van der Geugten and colleagues from Holland consider the moral reorientations of healthcare chaplains at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 healthcare chaplains during the lock-down of Dutch nursing homes, spring 2020. Thematic analyses revealed six subthemes as part of the overarching theme of "engagement

with the suffering other”. Participants had to overcome moral challenges which required a reorientation or revaluation of chaplaincy standards of care. Although the research focused on these particular COVID-19 circumstances, the relational work and accompanying moral perspective is intrinsically tied to chaplaincy practice. According to the researchers the study points to the need for attention to moral dilemmas and meaning-seeking processes of the chaplains themselves in crisis situations (van der Geugten et al., 2025). Readers should note there have been a number of other articles published in *HSCC* regarding chaplaincy practice during COVID-19 (see Carey et al., 2020; Carey, 2022; Carey et al., 2023).

Book Reviews

The following book reviews are available open access to HSCC readers.

- N. Cockling reviews Christopher C. H. Cook, Isabelle Hamley and John Swinton, *Struggling with God: Mental Health and Christian Spirituality* (2023) (<https://doi.org/10.1558/hsc.33533>).
- A. Heslop reviews Sacha Pearce and Jan Collis, *Creating Space: Story, Reflection and Practice in Healthcare Chaplaincy* (2022) (<https://doi.org/10.1558/hsc.33531>).
- G. Morgan reviews K. D. Acquaviva, *The Handbook of LGBTQIA-Inclusive Hospice and Spiritual Care* (2023) (<https://doi.org/10.1558/hsc.33532>).

Moral Injury Conference

Unfortunately, the International Moral Injury and Wellbeing conference was cancelled at short notice. However, in its place the Australian and New Zealand Moral Injury Conference (AZMIC 2026) “From Recognition to Recovery” is being sponsored by Leishman & Associates in Launceston, Tasmania, 21 and 22 May 2026 at the Grand Chancellor Hotel. The conference will prove valuable for healthcare clinicians, chaplains and emergency service personnel. For further details please see the following link: <https://anzmoralinjuryconference.com.au>

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