

15th Consultation
European Network of Health Care Chaplaincy
Belgium, Blankenberge, 15-19 June 2018



PAPERS

Nurturing Spirituality in Healthcare Chaplaincy



Supervision in teams: a way to cope with emotionally difficult experiences

Gudrun Rosén

Minister in the Lutheran Church of Sweden, Hospital Chaplain, Uppsala, Sweden

"In my head I saw everything like a movie. I saw the child in his bed and all his relatives. They had asked for support the first day they arrived at the hospital and I had followed them several days in their struggle for survival of the child. But on the fourth day he died. Their sorrow, grief and despair were deep and affected me and the staff at the ward. I got in the way of the grandmothers anger. She pointed at me and said: "I don't want you here. It is your God that made this happen. I don't want to see you." These words followed me into sleep that night."

This is a situation a Hospital Chaplain can wind up in. It is exhausting in several ways and can be a burden and affect you in other situations. I am interested in how the Hospital Chaplaincy affects you both professionally and in the private sphere. My understanding of the work is that to be able to pick up the emotions and unspoken messages you need to be close to the patient. You need to be open and attending and that makes you vulnerable. Therefore, you also need to distance yourself and a method to achieve that distance is through supervision. In supervision you can transform an experience like the one above into knowledge so it can be a resource and be helpful preventing emotional exhaustion. In my investigation of how work can affect you I found a study by the Swedish nurse and pedagogue Marja Schuster. Her study shows how nurses' deals with their work among patients close to death. The results of her research have some similarities to Hospital Chaplaincy. The Danish Psychotherapist Susanne Bang describes the risk and benefit from psychosocial work in her book "Rørt, rammet og rystet", which is applicable to chaplaincy and helpful knowledge. As for supervision my focus is on supervision in teams which is the kind of supervision I practice and have qualifications for. I believe that this together can be instruments for nurturing our spirituality.