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PAPERS

*Nurturing Spirituality in Healthcare Chaplaincy*



**Working with case studies: a way to professionalize and to discover a deeper spiritual awareness**

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Nowadays case studies are used in research regarding the profession of the chaplain, but before this, case studies were in the first place a way to discover the spirituality of the chaplain (FITCHETT, G. & NOLAN, S. (ed.), *Spiritual Care in Practice: Case Studies in Healthcare Chaplaincy*, London - Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2015; KÖRVER, S., *Wat doen geestelijk verzorgers?* in *Tijdschrift Geestelijke Verzorging* 19 (2016) 10-19).

Case studies offer a lot of information about the daily work of a chaplain. They give an overall picture of the interventions and outcomes of the chaplain, which creates the opportunity to professionalise and profile the profession of the chaplain. In my research four chaplains wrote a case study about their encounters with a patient. Afterwards they discussed their interventions and outcomes during a group session. At the beginning of this research, the goal of reflection on case studies was to enable chaplains to communicate their profession to patients, family members of patients, colleagues, policy of the hospital etc. But during the process of reflecting on interventions and outcomes, we discovered that case studies also reveal the spirituality of the chaplain. Every intervention of the chaplain is determined by the spirituality of the chaplain. For example the way in which the chaplain experiences God in his/her life, affects the way in which the chaplain guides the patient. In the case studies itself the spirituality of the chaplain is present, but in the reflection on the case study, the chaplain comes to a deeper spiritual awareness. Every time a chaplain profiles, communicates or investigates his profession, this is done from a reflection process. This process precedes profiling and professionalization and takes shape through the case study method. When the chaplain writes down his own background information about himself and the patient, the chaplain comes to a deeper self-awareness. When at a later stage the chaplain relates his actions to his own views and background, a new insight arises in him. Every action of the chaplain is based on a certain belief, cultural context, education, life experiences or religious community. The chaplain's journey towards himself is as important as research, profiling and professionalization. The emphasis on the professional side of chaplaincy cannot evolve without the spirituality of the chaplain.