

No training means spiritual care lacking in advanced cancer

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(HealthDay)—Although oncology nurses and physicians feel that spiritual care (SC) is an important, appropriate, and beneficial component of end-of-life (EOL) care for patients with advanced cancer, it is infrequently offered, primarily due to a lack of training, according to research published online Dec. 17 in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Michael J. Balboni, Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School in Boston, and colleagues surveyed 75 patients with advanced cancer receiving palliative [radiation therapy](#) and 339 oncology nurses and physicians. The

authors sought to examine factors that contribute to the infrequent provision of SC for patients at the EOL.

The researchers found that, although most patients with advanced cancer indicated that SC was an important component of [cancer care](#) from nurses (86 percent) and physicians (87 percent), the majority never received any form of SC from their oncology nurses (87 percent) or physicians (94 percent). Most nurses (87 percent) and physicians (80 percent) believed that SC should be provided at least sometimes. In eight examples of SC, the appropriateness was endorsed by the majority of patients (78 percent), nurses (93 percent), and physicians (87 percent). Reception of SC training was the strongest predictor of SC provision by nurses and doctors (odds ratios, 11.20 and 7.22, respectively), in adjusted analyses. The majority of nurses (88 percent) and physicians (86 percent) had not received training.

"In conclusion, patients with advanced cancer, nurses, and physicians recognize the importance, appropriateness, and beneficial impact of SC," the authors write. "The rarity of SC may be primarily due to the frequent lack of SC training."

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