

Religion and health: most of times, an excellent combination

Religião e saúde: na maioria das vezes, uma excelente combinação

Marcelo Saad¹, Roberta de Medeiros²

¹ Associação Médico Espírita de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brazil.

² Centro Universitário Lusíada, Santos, SP, Brazil.

DOI: 10.31744/einstein_journal/2021CE6382

Dear Editor,

The letter of Pasternak⁽¹⁾ raised controversial issues about the relationship between religion and health. We intend here to bring some elements for a conciliatory position. In the majority of research on the subject, religious-spiritual well-being is directly and positively associated with better parameters of physical and mental health, quality of life, and longevity.⁽²⁾ The benefit of religiosity to general health may be comparable to that are achieved from the consumption of fruits and vegetables.⁽³⁾

Thus, religiosity is not harmful to health. However, some religious interpretations may be inadequate, when selected parts of the scriptures are taken out of context. Sectarian or fanatical religious leaders can sometimes place the patient amid circumstances between medical and religious ethics. A dysfunctional belief system may encourage the patient to use the power of faith as a substitute for clinical care. A negative religious coping gives rise to spiritual distress and defensive behaviors, which affect treatment decisions, and well-being. Particular views about the sanctity of life may lead to dysthanasia, the persistence in futile treatments in terminal conditions.

On the other hand, a solid belief structure brings meaning, purpose, and connectivity. The result is a positive religious coping to face disease, manifested through strengthening, comfort, well-being, security, and idealism. To conclude, despite the constant challenge by issues raised by faith convictions, our role is to give the patients the best information and allow them to decide based on their values.⁽⁴⁾

AUTHORS' INFORMATION

Saad M: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5624-7609>

Medeiros R: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1046-7782>

REFERENCES

1. Pasternak J. Religion and health: not always good. *einstein* (São Paulo). 2020;18: eCE6133.
2. Saad M, Medeiros R. Implications for public health of the religiosity-longevity relation. *Rev Assoc Med Bras* (1992). 2017;63(10):837-41.
3. Lucchetti G, Lucchetti AL, Koenig HG. Impact of spirituality/religiosity on mortality: comparison with other health interventions. *Explore* (NY). 2011;7(4):234-8.
4. Moschovis PP. "Lord, I need a healing": the uneasy relationship between faith and medicine. *Virtual Mentor*. 2005 May 1;7(5):virtualmentor.2005.7.5.fred1-0505.

How to cite this article:

Saad M, Medeiros R. Religion and health: most of times, an excellent combination [letter]. *einstein* (São Paulo). 2021;19:eCE6382.

Received on:

Dec 13, 2020

Accepted on:

Jan 18, 2021

Copyright 2021



This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.