

hospital chaplains to develop their ability to understand human illness and crises and to

enhance their self-knowledge and interpersonal skills.

## 7. CONFIDENTIALITY

Legislation concerning the Church and health care system lays down in detail the obligation for hospital chaplains to maintain confidentiality.

Confessional privilege of a hospital chaplain is governed by the Church Act, and it cannot be breached. The purpose of the privilege is to protect people who confide in a pastor.

However, there are issues that override the seal of confessional privilege. An employee of the Church must be able to recognize victims of mental, spiritual, physical or sexual abuse. In certain circumstances a pastor must report a crime or criminal intent regardless of confessional privilege. A hospital chaplain is under obligation to report abuse\*.

## 8. PATIENT RELATIONSHIP

At the core of hospital chaplaincy is the confidential pastoral care relationship between the hospital chaplain and patient, in which the patient can address all issues of his/her life and illness, and receive spiritual support and consolation. The contact between the chaplain and the patient is usually initiated by the patient or his/her family. Discussions with a doctor or nurses may also direct the patient towards initial

contact. In the interest of maintaining the autonomy of the patient, the chaplain first ensures that the contact is indeed the will of the patient, and then proceeds to agree on the practices, goals and principles of the cooperation.

The chaplain will, if necessary, be in contact with other churches or religious communities in order to secure the pastoral care that the patient wishes for.

## 9. CARE TEAM

Patient care is a co-operative effort involving several professional groups in the health care system. The hospital chaplain can, if given permission by the patient, act in an advisory capacity in his/her own area of expertise regarding matters concerning the patient. The hospital

chaplain is responsible both to the care team and parish administration. The Church is responsible for maintaining the Christian identity of hospital chaplaincy and safeguarding its high quality.

\* Piispainkokouksen selonteko rippisalaisuuden ja lastensuojelun yhteensovittamisesta (*An account on the reconciliation of confessional privilege and child welfare by the Bishops' Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland; in Finnish only*) 2011. *Aika puhua – aika vaieta (Time to speak - time to keep silent; in Finnish only)* 2011, a Church Council publication.

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# Principles for Hospital Chaplaincy

THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF FINLAND<sup>+</sup>

## 1. POSITION OF HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY

The foundations of the hospital chaplaincy maintained by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland lie on one hand in the fundamental mission of the Church and, on the other hand, in the joint decisions and recommendations of the Church and the health care system:

*Standards for Health Care Chaplaincy in Europe, Turku Consultation, 15 June, 2002.*

*Kehittyvän avohoidon haaste seurakunnan sielunhoitotehtävälle. Suomen evankelisluterilaisen kirkon piispainkokous, kirjelmä no 6, 12.9.1989. (The challenge of the developing outpatient care to the parish pastoral care givers. The Bishops' Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, letter No. 6, 12 September, 1989; in Finnish only).*

*Suositus sielunhoidosta sairaaloissa, terveyskeskuksissa ja sosiaalityössä. Kirkkohallitus: Ohjeita ja tiedotuksia 13/1983 ja Lääkintöhallitus Dno 2013/101/83. (Recommendation for pastoral care in hospitals, health centres and social services. Church Council: Instructions and Communications 13/1983 and National Board of Health, registration number 2013/101/83; in Finnish only).*

Hospital chaplains are employees of parishes working in a health care setting.

## 2. VALUES IN HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY

Hospital chaplaincy maintained by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland works hand in hand with the health care system. Church strategy establishes the following four values: respect for the sacred, responsibility, justice, and truthfulness.

The aim of health care is in the promotion of health, prevention and treatment of disease and alleviation of suffering. The objective of pastoral care is to address the religious, spiritual and life-view questions of the sick and suffering.

## 3. EVOLVING REQUIREMENTS

Changes in health care impact hospital chaplaincy. The understanding of illness changes as medicine evolves. Individualism and strengthening privacy protection present new challenges to a care setting. Increased information on illness and treatment affects health care structures. Hospital stays are shortening. Hospital chaplaincy supports patients and health care

A pastoral care-giver respects the human dignity, beliefs and the integrity of the patient regardless of his/her background or view of life. Self-determination is clearly stated in the Constitution of Finland and in the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients. In helping the sick and suffering, the values of health care and pastoral care meet; both health care and pastoral care view people holistically, taking into account their physical, mental, social and spiritual needs.

professionals in this development. As the need for pastoral care in non-institutional care settings increases, the co-operation between parish workers becomes increasingly important and calls for new practices.

The ethnic, cultural and religious background of both patients and health care staff is becoming more diverse. The life-view and exist-

tential distress is no longer expressed exclusively in religious terms. A hospital chaplain must

have expertise in the ethics of various religions and the health care setting.

## 4. ACT ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND ACT ON THE STATUS AND RIGHTS OF PATIENTS – EFFECTS ON HOSPITAL CHAPLAINCY

Everyone living in Finland has the right to religious freedom. The Act on Religious Freedom of 2003 bestows religious freedom as a positive right. According to section 11 of the Constitution of Finland, everyone has the freedom of religion and conscience. Freedom of religion and conscience entails the right to profess and practice a religion, the right to express one's convictions and the right to be or decline to be a member of a religious community. No one is under the obligation, against his/her conscience, to participate in the practice of a religion.

Religious freedom is both an individual and a communal right. An example of this is for a patient and the pastoral care-giver to practice a common religion together, if they both so wish.

The rights of those who do not belong to religious communities or groups must be given absolute respect.

According to the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients, hospital chaplains are outsiders, since they are not health care professionals and do not participate in the care of the patient. Hospital chaplains are employees of the Church and observe the Church Act and Church Order.

The premise of the Act on the Status and Rights of Patients is the patients' right to self-determination. A hospital chaplain's right to view patient documents requires consent by the patient, or in exceptional cases by his/her representative.

## 5. MISSION OF HOSPITAL CHAPLAINS

Hospital chaplains – both ordained and non-ordained – are employees of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Their duty is to serve patients, their families and the health care staff as experts in questions concerning the values and view of life stirred by illness. Hospital chaplains promote holistic care by supporting the whole care community, and serve as a link between the religious communities and the health care system. If necessary, hospital chaplains participate in the deliberation of ethical questions in health care.

The duties of hospital chaplains also involve the non-institutional care setting, as well as supervision and training for both parish and health care staff. Voluntary work, as well as pas-

toral care after crises and disasters, brings additional duties to hospital chaplains. Religious and spiritual support in palliative care, support for grieving families and co-operation with the police and rescue services require the expertise of a hospital chaplain.

Discussions between hospital chaplains and patients do not always occur on religious terms, but there is a presence of a deeper dimension, a sense of the sacred. A hospital chaplain is an expert in spiritual issues, and an interpreter of the religious language. A hospital chaplain's duty is to bring the sacred to the everyday bustle of a hospital.

## 6. PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

In order to work as a hospital chaplain, one must pass an aptitude test and complete a specialis-

ation programme approved by the Church.

Continuing education and supervision help