Diploma in Practical Spirituality & Wellness
Spirituality and Medicine

Part 1
History and Culture
An Egyptian physician (1500 B.C.), clothed in clean white linen and a wig treats a patient with lockjaw (described in an ancient scroll known as the Edwin Smith papyrus). The patient is supported by a "brick chair."
Robert Thom
‘History of Medicine in Pictures’
commissioned by Parke, Davis & Co (was the US’s oldest and largest drug manufacturer) in 1930s.
Who owns the copyright on these images now?
Mesopotamia - a doctor defends himself against the complaints of patients
Every night for nearly a thousand years (500 B.C. - 500 A.D.), sick and afflicted pilgrims flocked to the Grecian Temples of Asclepius to take part of a ritual called incubation. The ancient kindly god of medicine was expected to visit them during a dream state and either heal or prescribe drugs, diet, and modes of treatment. Only requisites were that they should be clean and "think pure thoughts." To show their appreciation, recipients of Asclepius' favor caused votives (stone or terra cotta images of the afflicted parts which supposedly had been healed) to be made, suitably inscribed, and presented to be hung as testimony on the temple walls. More than 200 such temples existed.
Asclepius was the god of medicine in ancient Greek religion and mythology. His daughters include Hygieia the goddess of health and Panacea the goddess of universal remedy. The rod of Asclepius, a snake-entwined staff, remains a symbol of medicine today.
Arabic Medicine  Leaders in the Arabic medicine were the Persians, Rhazes, and Avicenna. Rhazes (865-925 A.D.), noted for keen observation and inventiveness, was first to describe measles and smallpox; to observe pupillary reaction to light; to use mercurial purgatives; and to publish a text on children's diseases. His teachings were highly regarded for many centuries.
India Susruta, famed Hindu surgeon, is depicted about to begin an otoplastic operation. The patient drugged with wine, is steaded by friends and relatives as the great surgeon sets about fashioning an artificial ear lobe. Details of this procedure, and of Susruta's surgical instruments, are to be found in the "Susruta-Samhita" ancient Indian text.
This merging of medicine and spirituality is not just to be found in ‘civilised’ cultures.

All across the world it is a normal part of tribal culture.
Aboriginal Medicine Man
Doctor or Priest?
Mapuche Medicine Women
Modern World Medicine Woman
In tribal societies and classical ‘civilisations’ the roles of doctor and priest are integrated.

Medicine Woman = Shaman - Priestess - Healer
In the roots of western civilisation, learning was mainly conducted within the safe confines of a temple, abbey or other sacred space. This of course included medicine.
Places of learning were abbeys, temples and ‘sacred’ places such as groves. The main subjects taught at medieval universities were Theology, Law, Medicine and the Arts. “Doctors”? — Of what? Medicine. Philosophy. Theology.
Notice the similarities between a herb garden, an abbey cloister and a university quadrangle. Which is this?
Medicinal herbs were grown in abbey gardens. Both the herbs and the garden heal. To which faith does this herb garden belong?
The first hospitals were in or alongside temples. The Great Room of the Poor (La Grand' Chambre des Povres) is believed to be the world's oldest edifice to have been in continuous use as a hospital. Representative of medieval hospitals, it is a part of the Hôtel-Dieu of Beaune, France, founded in 1443.
Florence Nightingale

She had a ‘calling’. Most nurses have a calling. Is this calling ethical or spiritual? Medics might be uncomfortable with the word ‘calling’. But what guided their career decision?
Mother Teresa
Perhaps the most famous figure of healing in the 20th Century
Sisters of the Mission of Charity
Today the relationship between religion/spirituality and medicine/healthcare is still clearly visible.
‘Spirituality emphasises the healing of the person, not just the disease. It views life as a journey, where good and bad experiences can help you to learn, develop and mature.’
In May 1984, the Thirty-Seventh World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA37.13, which named the "spiritual dimension" as an integral part of WHO Member States' strategies for health.
The Earth Summit Conference

Health ultimately depends on the ability to manage successfully the interaction between the physical, spiritual, biological and economic/social environment. *Agenda 21, 6.2*
The Nursing and Midwifery Council expects newly qualified graduate nurses to be able to:

In partnership with the person, their carers and their families, makes a holistic, person centred and systematic assessment of physical, emotional, psychological, social, cultural and spiritual needs, including risk, and together, develops a comprehensive personalised plan of nursing care.

(2011)
'Chief Executives are asked to ensure that this guidance is brought to the attention of all appropriate staff and, in particular, to ensure that:
They have appointed a senior lead manager for spiritual care.'

‘Spiritual care is usually given in a one-to-one relationship, is completely person-centred and makes no assumptions about personal conviction or life orientation .... Spiritual care is not necessarily religious. Religious care, at its best, should always be spiritual.’
'A doctor must adequately assess the patient’s conditions, taking account of their history (including the symptoms and psychological, spiritual, social and cultural factors), their views and values.'
Original Hippocratic Oath

I swear by Apollo, the healer, Aesclepius, Hygieia, and Panacea, and I take to witness all the gods, all the goddesses, to keep according to my ability and my judgment, the following Oath and agreement:

To consider dear to me, as my parents, him who taught me this art; to live in common with him and, if necessary, to share my goods with him; to look upon his children as my own brothers, to teach them this art; and that by my teaching, I will impart a knowledge of this art to my own sons, and to my teacher’s sons, and to disciples bound by an indenture and oath according to the medical laws, and no others.

I will prescribe regimens for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone.

I will give no deadly medicine to any one if asked, nor suggest any such counsel; and similarly I will not give a woman a pessary to cause an abortion.

But I will preserve the purity of my life and my arts.

I will not cut for stone, even for patients in whom the disease is manifest; I will leave this operation to be performed by practitioners, specialists in this art.

In every house where I come I will enter only for the good of my patients, keeping myself far from all intentional ill-doing and all seduction and especially from the pleasures of love with women or with men, be they free or slaves.

All that may come to my knowledge in the exercise of my profession or in daily commerce with men, which ought not to be spread abroad, I will keep secret and will never reveal.

If I keep this oath faithfully, may I enjoy my life and practice my art, respected by all humanity and in all times; but if I swerve from it or violate it, may the reverse be my life.
Hippocratic Oath Today

I swear to fulfill, to the best of my ability and judgment, this covenant:

I will respect the hard-won scientific gains of those physicians in whose steps I walk, and gladly share such knowledge as is mine with those who are to follow. I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures [that] are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism. I will remember that there is art to medicine as well as science, and that warmth, sympathy, and understanding may outweigh the surgeon's knife or the chemist's drug. I will not be ashamed to say "I know not," nor will I fail to call in my colleagues when the skills of another are needed for a patient's recovery. I will respect the privacy of my patients, for their problems are not disclosed to me that the world may know. Most especially must I tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all thanks. But it may also be within my power to take a life: this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play at God. I will remember that I do not treat a fever chart, a cancerous growth, but a sick human being, whose illness may affect the person's family and economic stability. My responsibility includes these related problems, if I am to care adequately for the sick. I will prevent disease whenever I can, for prevention is preferable to cure. I will remember that I remain a member of society, with special obligations to all my fellow human beings, those sound of mind and body as well as the infirm. If I do not violate this oath, may I enjoy life and art, respected while I live and remembered with affection thereafter. May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my calling and may I long experience the joy of healing those who seek my help.

Louis Lasagna, Academic Dean of the School of Medicine at Tufts University, 1964

Historically medicine and religion, healthcare and spirituality, sit comfortably together.
Medicine

Spirituality

care for

Body

Soul

Both seek to relieve suffering, give compassion and enrich life
Some doctors of medicine are more interested in science than the care of bodies. Vice versa.

Some doctors of religion are more interested in theology than the care of souls. Vice versa.
This engagement with spirituality is also found in education.
**Education Reform Act of 1988**

*The opening sentence*

‘The curriculum for a maintained school (must be) a balanced and broadly based curriculum which — promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society.’

**Education (Schools) Act 1992**

‘The Chief Inspector for England shall have the general duty of keeping the Secretary of State informed about … the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at those schools.’
Para 128
‘Before making the final judgement on the overall effectiveness, inspectors must also evaluate: the effectiveness and impact of the provision for pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development . . .’
Code of Ethics for Social Workers 2012

Upholding and promoting human dignity and well-being

‘Social workers should respect, uphold and defend each person’s physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual integrity and well-being.’
Spirituality and Medicine

Part 2

Evidence and Science
Both Medicine and Spirituality seek to care for Body and Soul, relieving suffering, giving compassion, and enriching life.
Perhaps all those noble statements are just hopeful words. So here is the first big question:

*Is there evidence for the health benefits of spirituality?*
Oh YES there is!
There is thorough and rigorous research demonstrating the health and wellbeing benefits of religion and spirituality. Benefits for physical and mental health. Benefits for the wider community.

Of course there are risks and bad practice. These are fully acknowledged in the research.
Harold D Koenig
Key Paper 1

Koenig’s 2012 paper reviewed over 3,300 studies of health and religion/spirituality

Major Conclusion
‘A large volume of research shows that people who are more R/S have better mental health and adapt more quickly to health problems compared to those who are less R/S.’

3,300 Studies!
Analysing eight decades of rigorous research, this paper concluded:

‘Believers performed better, had better health and greater happiness, and lived longer than non-believers.’

‘People who were highly religious were, on average, 29% more likely to be alive at any given follow-up point than were less religious people . . . 25% reduction in mortality….’
PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF R/S

- Coronary Heart Disease
- Hypertension
- Cerebrovascular Disease
- Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia
- Immune Function
- Endocrine Function
- Cancer
- Physical Functioning
- Self-Rated Health
- Pain and Somatic Symptoms
- Mortality
MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS OF R/S

- Coping with Adversity
- Positive Emotions
- Wellbeing / Happiness
- Hope
- Meaning and Purpose
- Self-Esteem
- Sense of Control
- Positive Character Traits
- Depression
- Suicide
- Anxiety
- Psychotic Disorder/Schizophrenia
- Bipolar Disorder
- Substance Abuse
SOCIAL PROBLEMS - BENEFITS OF R/S

- Delinquency/Crime
- Marital Instability
- Social Support
- Social Capital

\[\text{BETTER}^\checkmark\]
HEALTH BEHAVIOURS BENEFITS OF R/S

- Smoking
- Exercise
- Diet
- Weight
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Sex
Having established the rigorous statistical evidence for the benefits the second big question is:

How do religion and spirituality actually achieve these benefits?

What is the science, the physiology?
We are in the business of enabling tense coagulated tissue to be at ease.
Five Major Triggers

1. Community
2. Meaning
3. Life Style
4. Spiritual Practices
5. Giving Care & Compassion
1. COMMUNITY

With people. With nature. With God. With saints, spirits, angels …
Who or what is the community here? People, nature, ocean …?
A story that makes sense of life … Gives purpose and meaning … Reduces existential anxiety…
A story that makes sense of life ... Gives purpose and meaning ... Reduces existential anxiety...

It costs $0.00 to be a decent human being.

Ethics, moral code, values, ‘do unto others . . .’
3. LIFE STYLE

Moderation, continence, exercise, diet, fasting, etc
MODERATE LIFE STYLE

- Improved physical health
- Improved psychological wellbeing from self-management
4. SPIRITUAL PRACTICES
SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

- Meditation
- Walking
- Landscape
- Study
- Caring
- Movement
- Voice
- Art
- Breath
- Cooking
- Prayer
- Ceremony
- Pilgrim
- Fast
- Empty

and many more
5. Care & Compassion

The body language and mood of giving care . . .
Five Major Factors

1. Community
2. Meaning
3. Life Style
4. Spiritual Practices
5. Giving Care & Compassion
The science is based in an understanding of how all the different parts of the body are connected. This science is continually developing.

This is an ‘integrative’ or ‘holistic’ approach to anatomy and physiology.
The body is an integrated system.

All its parts — organs, cells, nerves, tissue, blood, hormones, etc — are connected and effect each other.
Three Key Systems/Factors

1. Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) (Mind-Body)
2. Heart Rate Variability
3. Gut Flora, Enteric Nervous System
What happens in the mind-brain-emotions directly affects the whole body.

Vagus Nerve

Brain

Heart

Gut
What happens in the mind-brain-emotions directly affects the whole body.
Thoughts, moods and emotions are events in the brain / nervous system / endocrine system.

(1) Psycho—Neuro—Immunology (PNI)
Anxiety  

Affection  

Enjoyment  

Sexual attraction  

Chocolate  

—>  Adrenalin/Cortisol  

—>  Oxytocin  

—>  Endorphins  

—>  Testosterone  

—>  Digestive juices
Adrenalin + Cortisol
Endorphins, Oxytocin, Serotonin

Reassurance

Happiness
What happens in the mind-brain-emotions directly affects the whole body

Vagus Nerve

Brain
Heart
Gut
HRV is defined as the fluctuations in heart rate (HR) from beat-to-beat as measured in milliseconds. It is the strongest single predictor of death after accounting for medications, demographics, and multiple clinical factors.
Heart rate variability
M Malik - Annals of Noninvasive Electrocardiology, 1996 - Wiley Online Library
The last two decades have witnessed the recognition of a significant relationship between the autonomic nervous system and cardiovascular mortality, including sudden cardiac death. 1-4 Experimental evidence for an association between propensity for lethal
Cited by 1078  Related articles  All 3 versions  Cite  Save

Heart rate variability
Cited by 712  Related articles  All 7 versions  Cite  Save

Heart rate variability
THE RHYTHM OF THE HEART has not only fascinated cardiologists but also inspired poets and musicians. Indeed, the periodic beat of the heart was used to define the speed of music. In music notation, the traditional Italian term "moderato" originally referred to one beat of the
Cited by 235  Related articles  All 4 versions  Cite  Save
Heart rate variability

M Malik - Annals of Noninvasive Electrocardiology, 1996 - Wiley

The last two decades have witnessed the recognition of a significant association between the autonomic nervous system and cardiovascular mortality, including cardiac death. This paper presents experimental evidence for an association between heart rate variability and cardiac mortality.
A few Android apps for HRV
Heart beats are triggered by an electric impulse. This impulse is connected to the vagus nerve. The vagus nerve is also connected to
- the lungs (breath)
- the brain
- the gut
Vagus nerve (parasympathetic) decreases heart rate.

Sympathetic cardiac nerves increase heart rate and force of contraction.
NB Heartbeat is triggered by electric impulses
Exercise + Relaxation + Good attitude = Healthy HRV
HRV Bottom Line

HRV Congruent and High
Breath at Ease

ie

Healthy Heart
Healthy Lungs
Healthy Blood Pressure
What happens in the mind-brain-emotions directly affects the whole body.
Gut Flora, Gut Brain
Two brains in one body

The enteric nervous system in the gut, or "second brain", shares many features with the brain in your head. It can act autonomously and even influence behaviour by sending messages up the vagus nerve to the brain.

**BRAIN**
- GABA cells support 95% of pain receptors
- 100 neurotransmitters identified
- Products 90% of all dopamine
- Serotoninergic neurons to brain

**SECOND BRAIN**
- GABA cells support 90% of immune cells
- 500 neurotransmitters identified
- Products 95% of all dopamine
- Produces 95% of all serotonin
- Serotoninergic neurons to blood flow to second brain

**SPINAL CORD**

**VAGUS NERVE**
We were once worms. Just a tube. Where was the brain? Where was the nervous system? The ancient gut-brain is still inside us.

Enteric nervous system
Unhealthy Gut Symptoms

Chronic constipation, bloating, diarrhea, irritable bowel disease, diverticulosis, depressed immunity, chronic fatigue, anemia, infertility, amenorrhea, acne, hair loss, graying hair, premature aging, prediabetes, diabetes, neurological damage intestinal disorders, oral sores, asthma, acne, seborrhea ...
An unhealthy gut is also implicated in depression, parkinsons, dementia and other mental health challenges.
Healthy Gut —> Healthy Flora —> Healthy Digestion —> Healthy Mind —> Healthy Emotions —> Healthy Gut …

(Poo transplants)
Summary

• Healthy Neuro-Endocrininal System
• Healthy Heart Rate Variability
• Healthy Gut

are all strongly influenced by whether we are psychologically and emotionally anxious or at ease.
STUDENTS
Become familiar with your own anatomy. This is useful for self-healing and confidence in conversations.
How do religion and spirituality influence PNI, HRV and gut — to achieve health and wellbeing benefits?
How do religion and spirituality send positive and calming messages through the body?

Less adrenalin / cortisol; more endorphins etc

Heart & Breath integrated

Gut flora in harmony
Five Major Triggers

1. **Community**
2. **Meaning**
3. **Life Style**
4. **Spiritual Practices**
5. **Giving Care & Compassion**
Who or what is the community here? People, nature, ocean ...?
Meaning

A story that makes sense of life …
Moderation, continence, exercise, diet, fasting, etc
MODERATE LIFE STYLE

- Improved physical health
- Improved psychological wellbeing from self-management
Joe Green: New Father New Son
Community
 Meaning
 Life Style
 Spiritual Practices
 Care & Compassion

Better physical and psychological health
All these factors — community, meaning, lifestyle, spiritual practices — bring our bodies into a state of feeling at ease.

This is not rocket science
SOME GOOD NEWS
It is not difficult to achieve this state of being at ease.
There is a *universal* body language and body experience of being *at ease*.

It is embedded in us.

It is part of our *mammalian* nature.

It is like coming home ...

... *coming home to our bodies*
Hormones Calm   Heart Breath Integrated
Gut Harmonious
There is a universal body language of being *at ease*. 
It is embedded in us. 
It is part of our *mammalian* nature. 
It is like coming home ...
Spirituality and spiritual practices can bring us all home to being at ease in our bodies.
How do you do it?
What works best for you?
Where do you find community?
Where do you find meaning?
How do you regulate your life style?
What spiritual practices work for you?
Spirituality and Medicine

Part 3

Resolving the Paradigm War
Some doctors of medicine are more interested in science than the care of bodies. Vice versa.

Some doctors of religion are more interested in theology than the care of souls. Vice versa.
So why is there a problem between medicine and spirituality, between science and religion?
In fact the problem is a very old debate about what actually works. The argument is really about

Good Science
vs
Bad Science
Good Science vs Bad Science

Good Science = Evidence for the benefits
Bad Science = No evidence
The Gods are angry!
NO!
You have the flu.
Good Science vs Bad Science

To some minds
Bad Science = Superstition = Religion = Spirituality
Trepanation
The Dung Cure
Blood Letting - releasing ‘bad’ blood
The argument is *not* between medicine and religion.

It is *not* between science and spirituality.

The argument is between good science and bad science.

Does it work? Is there evidence that it works?
Some doctors of medicine are more interested in science than the care of bodies. Vice versa.

Some doctors of religion are more interested in theology than the care of souls. Vice versa.
The problem and the arguments arise when religious or spiritual people make medical claims for which there is no evidence base and no clear explanation.
Spiritual people often experience subtle sensations which they interpret as being associated with an invisible energy field. This is at the essence of spiritual healing. It is part of the Christian ‘laying on of hands’.
An energy field, or healing energy, is scientifically acceptable in medicine \textit{providing} it is understood as a \textit{belief} that gives meaning and therefore reduces anxiety.

But \textit{not} as scientific fact. Right now in 2016 there is little evidence for it. There are very few peer reviewed papers or scholarly publications.
REMEMBER

Koenig’s 2012 paper reviewed over 3,300 studies of health and religion/spirituality

Major Conclusion
“A large volume of research shows that people who are more R/S have better mental health and adapt more quickly to health problems compared to those who are less R/S.”

3,300 Studies!
BUT

There is *no* substantial theory, science or evidence in peer reviewed scholarly papers for energy/prana/qi.

There is little substantial evidence for its health benefits. (The companionship and support of a healer’s presence may deliver the beneficial results.)
HOWEVER
The belief in and experience of a subtle energy field is multifaith, multicultural and widespread.
It is embedded in healthcare models such as the Ayurvedic tradition in India and the Taoist in Japan and China.
aether (alchemy, Latin); akasha (Hindu); asha (Iranian); astral light (Theosophy); awen (Welsh); bliss fields (generic); cosmic ocean (generic); elan vital (vitalism); holy spirit/ghost (Christian); ichor (Greek); inua (Inuit); ka (Egyptian); loong (Tibetan); maban (Australian Aboriginal); mana (Polynesian); manitou (Anishinabe); numen (Latin); orenda (Iroquois); prana (Hindu); presence (generic); qi (chi) (Taoist); sakina (Islam); seid (Norse); shekinah (Jewish); teotl (Aztec); väki (Finnish).
For some it is very obvious. The Earth has a magnetic field. Humans have a magnetic field. It is all energy.
To a scientific type who has no direct experience of healing energy or qi/prana, it can all sound like superstitious bad science — which may harm people. For example: there is no evidence that spiritual healing cures cancer.

There is no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.
Conspiracy? Some people are suspicious of modern medicine and the pharmaceutical industry. They suspect that vested interests are resisting energy and complementary medicine.
## Reality Check on Conspiracy Theory

### UK Infant Mortality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Deaths per 1000 births</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

### UK Life expectancy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Life expectancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1700</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is the solution to this conflict between worldviews?
Possible Solution - 1
A gizmo sensitive enough to measure energy fields.
Possible Solution - 2

biophilia
The connections that human beings subconsciously seek with the rest of life
Possible Solution - 3
Communication & Relationship

• A balanced and patient attitude
• Appreciate the validity of both sides
• Avoid ‘energy’, ‘prana’, ‘qi’
• Guide the conversation to the kindness and compassion required for good care
Compassion and Care
The keys to a humane conversation

www.spiritualcompanions.org
Recommended Books