

A decorative graphic featuring a collection of white circles of various sizes, each with a purple crescent moon shape cut out of its right side. These circles are scattered across the upper and middle portions of the page. In the bottom-left corner, there is a solid red triangle pointing towards the right.

**How to build relationships
with patients from different
cultures and religions**

Charter of Best Practices

For Religious Pluralism and Spiritual Care in Healthcare Settings

Introduction

The non-profit association “Insieme per Prenderci Cura” (Together to Care for One Another), whose activities took place between 2016 and 2018 and resulted in the publication of the volume “Salute e identità religiose”, proposes a “Charter of Best Practices” addressed to hospital medical staff and, more broadly, to all professionals involved in healthcare and patient care.

The purpose of this Charter is to promote greater awareness and a more responsible and appropriate approach within healthcare settings in response to cultural and religious pluralism, increasingly shaped by ongoing migration flows.

This document complements the Patients’ Rights Charter, already known and in use within healthcare and social care institutions.

What appears to unite the various orientations of spiritual and religious traditions and denominations — Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu — is a holistic vision of the human

person, both men and women, not limited to the mere dimension of the “physical body”, but extending also to the spiritual dimension. This perspective does not seek to confessionalize the hospital environment, nor to justify exceptions to the need to comply with the regulations, practices, and procedures that govern the healthcare context. Rather, it aims to offer reflections that may help foster more effective collaboration and synergy in caring for one another, sharing responsibilities and hopes within a broader humanistic framework. globale.

Charter of Best Practices

for Religious Pluralism and Spiritual Care in Healthcare Settings

Foreword

- There are no different “values” of human lives; all lives possess incommensurable value and equal dignity and importance, by virtue of the principle of equality. Therefore, every person must be considered and cared for with the same highest level of respect and attention, avoiding any form of discrimination.
- Religion and spirituality constitute intrinsic aspects of the human person and are expressed through a set of beliefs, values, traditions, rituals, and practices, which develop dynamically across the different dimensions of human existence.
- The laws of European states provide for the recognition of human dignity and guarantee fundamental freedoms and inviolable rights, including those pertaining to the religious sphere, both individually and within the social formations in which one’s personality is expressed.
- The legal provisions governing the establishment of National Health Services in European countries provide that religious assistance within

public healthcare facilities shall be ensured in accordance with the individual's will and freedom of conscience.

(I) Best Practices for Attention to Cultural and Religious Pluralism

- 1) In hospitals, nursing homes, care facilities, and social and outpatient care institutions, freedom of religion or belief shall be ensured, in a manner compatible with the specific organizational, operational, and safety requirements of the healthcare environment.
- 2) Within the facilities referred to in the first point, every individual has the right, upon their own request (or upon request of their family members when the individual is unable to express such a wish), to receive spiritual assistance from representatives of religious or spiritual traditions, whether confessional or non-confessional.
- 3) Within the aforementioned facilities, spiritual and religious assistance shall aim to ensure respect for the practice of worship, dietary regulations, and religious observances and festivities of the patient, in accordance with their faith and spiritual convictions, without thereby hindering the diagnosis and essential, non-deferrable medical treatments necessary for the patient's life.
- 4) In addition to the above, spiritual and religious assistance, while respecting the sensitivities and wishes of the patient, shall give

particular consideration to aspects relating specifically to:

- care;
 - beginning of life;
 - contraception;
 - procreation;
 - termination of pregnancy;
 - organ donation and transplantation;
 - end-of-life issues, including advance healthcare directives and palliative care;
 - withdrawal or discontinuation¹ of therapeutic interventions.
- 5) Within the framework of religious pluralism recognized and protected by the State, it is desirable that all healthcare personnel possess a basic understanding of the religious and cultural principles and practices of the various faith traditions as they relate to health and the life of the patient.

(II) Responsibilities of the Hospital Institution

For the provision of religious assistance services, the hospital administration undertakes to ensure:

- appropriate spaces for religious worship, including the designation of a dedicated room for this purpose;

¹[Editor's note]

- a mortuary facility suitable for funeral rites in accordance with the various religious or spiritual traditions. In the event of death during hospitalization in the facilities referred to in point 1, the necessary measures shall be adopted to ensure the celebration of funeral rites in accordance with the wishes expressed by the deceased during their lifetime or, in the absence of such declarations, in accordance with the religious or spiritual traditions of the deceased or their family members;
- a list of cultural mediators and ministers of worship representing the different religions.
- Subject to internal organizational and budgetary requirements, the facilities referred to in point 1 shall ensure, for those who request it, the possibility to observe religious prescriptions concerning dietary requirements and abstention from work linked to their religion or belief. They shall also ensure the receipt of religious or spiritual publications and the display of images or symbols of one's religion or belief within the personal spaces reserved for the individual.

(III) Responsibilities of Hospital Staff

- Medical and healthcare staff shall ensure that they possess the necessary awareness and sensitivity so that the patient is treated and cared for in respect of their religion or belief.
- Healthcare professionals forming part of the medical team shall identify

the most appropriate communication methods (including, where necessary, the involvement of cultural mediators) taking into account the cultural, religious, and spiritual background of the patient receiving care.

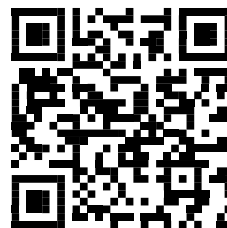
- During hospitalization, patients shall not be prevented from exercising their freedom of religion or from observing their religious practices, insofar as this remains compatible with the medical requirements of diagnosis and treatment.

(IV) Responsibilities of Patients

It is understood that, while respecting the different religious and cultural identities, patients are required to comply with the laws, regulations, and rules that safeguard both their own safety and health and that of others.

The Scientific Committee of
“Insieme per prenderci cura”

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