

## A TREATISE OF THE ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHER IBN SINA (AVICENNA) ON THE FEAR OF DEATH AND THE TREATMENT OF ANXIETY CAUSED BY IT

Ahmed Pajević<sup>1</sup>, Izet Pajević<sup>1,2</sup>, Edin Dedić<sup>3</sup> & Mevludin Hasanović<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Medicine, University in Tuzla, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Psychiatry, University Clinical Center Tuzla, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

<sup>3</sup>*Behram-Bey's Madrasa, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Although the issue of death and fear of it is one of the oldest issues that man has dealt with, modern secular psychiatry today, as before, does not pay enough attention to the phenomenon of fear of death. The famous Islamic philosopher and physician Ibn Sina, better known in the West as Avicenna (980-1037), wrote *A Treatise on the Cure for the Fear of Death and the Treatment of Anxiety Caused by It* ten centuries ago. Bosnian Islamic scholar Mehmed Handžić translated this treatise from Arabic into Bosnian 80 years ago. This paper provides basic data and a summary of this translation with a focus on the analysis of key terms from the Arabic language used by the author in the original paper from the perspective of today's psychiatric terminology and then its integral translation into English. In addition to its historical significance, we believe that this discussion has its practical significance today, so we hope that this paper could encourage further fruitful discussions in professional circles dealing with this topic.

**Keywords:** fear of death, anxiety, Ibn Sina, Avicenna, psychiatry, psychotherapy

\* \* \* \* \*

## BEYOND PLACEBO: PRAYER EXPLOITING SYNCHRONICITIES TO BENEFIT HEALTH

Maja Roje Novak

*Private neurologic ordination, Zagreb, Croatia*

According to the law of attraction the Universe works with us to bring us what we desire. However, there is commonly a gap between what our conscious mind desires and what our subconscious mind attracts and brings into our lives. Prayer makes us feel connected to God and help us to attract what is good for us. We invite God in to help us create physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being. Placebo reactors tend to be individuals who: have a predisposition to be cured; are motivated to regain health; seek out medical services; agree to medical procedures, and experience empowerment through rituals that provide a direct experience or being in contact with culturally-recognized healing influences. God wants us to be happy and healthy and to free us from pain and suffering. Synchronicity refers to the occurrence of two parallel events that are connected by meaning and not by cause, which have been described in association with prayer. According to the principle of similarity or symmetry, a kind of "law of attraction", in a holographic universe one situation attracts a similar situation. In medicine this phenomenon may be useful to aid healing. If we form a mental picture or simulate the situation of being cured, the principle of similarity will occur and draw in our reality the wanted outcome. If we connect this process with prayer, it will be more likely that we can attract wanted similarities into our lives. Praying can attract healing by promoting synchronicities, and we can conclude that prayer does not work simply via the placebo reaction but also in a transpersonal, non-local manner by facilitating convenient synchronicities

**Key words:** the law of attraction- prayer - placebo - rituals - synchronicity

\* \* \* \* \*

## PSYCHO-ONCOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY

Ivana Ljubičić Bistrović<sup>1</sup>, Mario Tomljanović<sup>2</sup> & Rudolf Ljubičić<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Universty Hospital Center Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia*

<sup>2</sup>*Theology of Rijeka, Chatolic Faculty of Theology, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia*

The prevalence of malignant diseases is increasing, and, although a number of oncological treatments lead to high survival rates, in order for a person to cope with the challenges of a serious diagnosis, mental health should be preserved in the first place. Psycho-oncology has recognized the importance of mental health in the treatment of carcinoma, and numerous clinical studies have stressed the importance of distinguishing normal emotional reactions from mental disorders. A task of modern medicine is to be personality-centred and participatory, taking into account the patient's physical, psychological and spiritual

health. The psycho-oncological approach is a multidisciplinary one, as modern medicine recognizes more and more the role of spirituality in the treatment and recovery from various pathological conditions. Spirituality is the adaptive capability of intelligent beings to retain the will for life in spite of adversities and awareness of the imminence of death. The struggle with this life-threatening disease requires an adaptation to a new life situation characterized by changed routines of everyday life and dynamics of personal relationships. Faced with a challenge of malignant disease people are nevertheless able to react with positive personality changes, which leads them to a more meaningful and substantial life. Malignant disease can represent an opportunity for spiritual growth, a dimension often neglected by contemporary lifestyles. A healthy spiritual life presumes spiritual guidance in recognizing the authentic values and purpose of life, and it can empower us in times of crisis, such as having to face a malignant condition.

Religion, as an important constituent part of spirituality, can offer the believer a meaning of suffering and thus turn the disease into an opportunity for self-knowledge and development of a more mature spirituality. Christian spirituality can represent a path which helps an individual to cope with malignant disease. Through the practice of religious life (prayer, Mass, contemplating the Gospel, etc.) a Christian can mitigate feelings of fear, suffering, pain and gain help in achieving inner peace. Religiosity as a key ingredient of spirituality can help a person come to terms with malignant disease and facilitate a favourable treatment outcome. Clinical studies confirm that spirituality and religiosity are able to reduce anxiety and depression in patients with malignant disease (Chaar et al. 2018). Also, highly pronounced religiosity has been shown to reduce the incidence of depression in patients with breast carcinoma (Margetić et al. 2005). In Christian spirituality, the goal is not only to accept our feelings, wounds and illnesses by growing in manhood and discovering inner wealth, but also to acquire the experience of faith precisely where our human ability stops, thus opening up our relationship with God at the point where we feel entirely alone (Grun & Dufner 2004).

“Psycho-oncology and spirituality” is an interdisciplinary field which opens up the way to a personalized approach, envisioning the patient as a whole and encouraging him to actively participate in the treatment process, thus achieving spiritual growth and a higher quality of life.

With the aim of educating and sensitising students in accordance with current medical trends, the Medical Faculty of the University of Rijeka has introduced in 2019 an elective course called “Psycho-oncology and spirituality”. The goal of this course is to enable students to identify emotional reactions to the disease in oncological patients, recognize parallel mental comorbidities, and finally, clarify the need for a multidisciplinary approach involving an oncologist, a psychiatrist and a psychotherapist, as well as to elucidate the importance of spirituality in the process of oncological treatment. Through lectures and exercises, students familiarize themselves with theory, clinical studies as well as clinical practice relating to interconnectedness of oncological pathology with certain psychiatric disorders, along with acquiring an all-encompassing view of spirituality, as seen from several perspectives (biological, theoretical principles, etc.). Students are also taught to observe the religious life of patients, in order to be able to understand, appreciate and encourage patients to affirm their faith with the aim of achieving therapeutic goals.

**Key words:** psycho-oncology - spirituality - religion

\* \* \* \* \*

## **COMPASSION: AN EXPRESSION OF CHARITY IN TREATMENT OF PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ILLNESS IN INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES**

**Josip Bošnjaković**

*Catholic Faculty of Theology in Đakovo, University Josip Juraj Strossmayer of Osijek, Osijek, Croatia  
Department of Psychology, Catholic University of Croatia, Odjel za psihologiju, Zagreb, Croatia*

This article discusses the notion of compassion using interdisciplinary approach - theological and psychological - providing a brief development of the notion, as well as distinct image in relation to other, similar notions. Seeing that compassion contributes to psychological, spiritual, as well as social health, the article also discusses the importance of compassion in life of individuals and communities. Compassion is also one of the core notions in world religions, and it is key to making communication between religions possible, and equally importantly, opens up a dialogue between religion and various scientific approaches. This article mostly refers to the notion of compassion as described in the Bible, namely New Testament, from aspect of Christianity. Still, in a smaller extent, we researched how Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and