

**Submission Id: 4697**

**Title**

*When Prayer is Not Enough: The Role of Clergy in Healthcare*

**Priority 1 (Research Category)**

Social determinants and vulnerable populations

**Presenters**

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**Abstract**

Context - The role of the clergy in healthcare: pastor, rabbi, chaplain has typically been considered one of support, encouragement, and spiritual presence. Clergy pray at the bedside. Clergy may visit the hospital; they are present for the patient and their family. They may go to the home, nursing home, clinic, or rehabilitation facility to offer a friendly face, words of encouragement, and always a prayer. Sometimes prayer is not enough. Objective - The objective of this project was to explore an expanded role of clergy and faith-based organizations in healthcare. Study Design - Literature review and mixed methods conversations with clergy, faith-based organizational leaders, and clinicians using case vignettes. Setting - community. Population - parish clergy, hospital chaplains, community clinicians and patients. Intervention - n/a. Outcome Measures - Healthcare related questions and activities of clergy and faith-based communities. Results - In addition to prayer, a wide range of healthcare actions are available to faith-based organizations and clergy. Preparing a place of worship for medical emergencies, providing direct clinical services, and collaborating on public health initiatives are potential activities for faith-based organizations. Addressing the social determinants of health may be a collaborative effort between healthcare and faith-based organizations. Clergy may serve as patient advocate and interface between patient and hospital physicians and staff to support patient autonomy and agency. Clergy may join conversations around advanced care planning, end-of-life issues, and medical ethics, in general, and in support of an individual parishioner. Understanding the basic language of healthcare may improve opportunities for clergy to support their members who need healthcare services. Clergy self-care and support for healthcare personnel may mitigate secondary trauma and burnout. Conclusions - Sometimes prayer is not enough. Clergy may service a multitude of roles in support of their members. It is also crucial for clinicians and healthcare systems to recognize and support the role of clergy in the care of patients.