Spirituality/Religiousness and the General Well-Being of Older Adults

Susan P. McCoy

School of Social Work

Abstract: Spirituality is an important resource for older adults in terms of an intra-psychic means of coping and adaptation with issues of daily life, loss, and death. However, little is known about impact of spirituality/religiousness on the general well-being of older adults. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of spirituality/religiousness on the general well-being of older adults in seven central states. This study is important for social workers to increase their assessment and intervention skills utilizing religiousness/spirituality to minimize the health problems of older adults. Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted through a convenience sampling method for 143 older adults 65 year-old or over from 15 counties in seven central states. To measure various domains of health status, the General Well-Being Schedule (GWBS) was used. To measure spirituality/religiousness, the Brief Multidimensional Measures of Religiousness/Spirituality (BMMRS) was used. Results: The respondents ranged in age from 65 to 97. The other characteristics showed female (55.2%); Caucasian (63.4%); married (47.9%). Regression results showed that higher spiritual experience is significantly associated with lower anxiety (B= -.37, ≤ .01), greater positive well-being (B=.46, ≤ .01), and greater vitality (B=.36, p ≤ .05). Religious support is a negative factor in the positive well-being of older adults (B=.24, p ≤ .05). Implications: Social work practitioners should assess the religious background of clients, family, community, and nation and level of concerns in use of spiritual recourses. However, the religious/spiritual intervention of social work practitioners should be offered as a type of therapeutic options because some clients do not like religious/spiritual activities and some religious/spiritual intervention can cause negative results to clients.

Faculty Sponsor: Kyoung Hag Lee

URCAF 2009 first place winner of poster presentations in the Social Science section.