

## PRESS RELEASE

### POTENTIAL OF HEALTHCARE CHAPLAINCY UNDERUSED IN FIRST WAVE OF PANDEMIC

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#### Key results

1. 1657 healthcare chaplains from 36 countries participated in an online survey on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on spiritual care. Providing spiritual care was deeply affected by the lack of presence, shared spirituality, end of life care etc.
2. The majority of chaplains in three continents claimed to be underused by their management during the first wave of the pandemic. The survey points to a range of causes like lack of protective gear but also lack of knowledge/recognition regarding chaplaincy as a resource for staff, patients and families and a lack of advocacy on the part of chaplains themselves. Staff experiencing spiritual care were more likely to make referrals.
3. Chaplains did whatever they could and were very creative in dealing with the circumstances turning to staff care, creating new rituals, turning to telechaplaincy, involving themselves in policymaking and other issues that benefitted the whole of healthcare. The new ways of providing spiritual care need to be researched further and implemented in training and education.
4. In many cases chaplains were morally injured because they could not give essential spiritual care to people in need. Especially loneliness of patients/residents at the end of life was heart-breaking to witness. Helplessness is part of the wide range of emotions chaplains were left to deal with since the start of the pandemic.

For more information, please check the website of ERICH (European Research Institute for Chaplains in Healthcare) <https://www.pastoralezorg.be/page/international-survey-covid-19/>  
For USA: CIL (Chaplaincy Innovation Lab) <https://chaplaincyinnovation.org>  
And: ACPE (Association for Clinical Pastoral Education) <https://acpe.edu/>  
For Australia: SHA (Spiritual Health Association) <https://www.spiritualhealth.org.au/research>

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