

**From:** Owen Lewis  
**To:** [medboardconsultation](#)  
**Subject:** 'Public consultation on Good medical practice '  
**Date:** Saturday, 11 August 2018 10:23:56 PM

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Attention

Dr Joanna Flynn AM,  
Chair, Medical Board of Australia,  
GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.  
Executive Officer, Medical, AHPRA, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne 3001.  
Dear Medical Board of Australia Consultation team,

Dear Dr. Joanna Flynn,  
You have received submissions from CMDFA and PRiME Australia. I am a member of these groups and support what has been written.

I think it is important that spiritual and religious aspects of healthcare are not glossed over. Australia is increasingly secular and this secularism tends to be based on atheism or agnosticism. It would be easy for those views to dominate in such a way that official statements such as that on Good Medical Practice could suppress or oppress spiritual or religious expression by patient or doctor. The values underpinning Good Medical Practice should not be dominated by atheistic secular ones but on a more religiously tolerant secularism such as that of India.

- Immigrants are generally more religious than longer inhabitants of Australia. Their world view is often very spiritual and religious practice very much a part of the culture they have been brought up in.
- Aboriginal people often have deeply held spiritual beliefs and cultural practices that may be ignored or misunderstood by mainstream health practice.
- At the end of life patients may have deep existential issues. If patient and doctor are unable to discuss these openly in an appropriate culturally appropriate way, the distress may not be addressed. Chaplains continue to handle these situations, but are often not accessible because of the shift towards a more secular model. While they used to be on the wards routinely now it is unusual and only at specific request.

The World Health Organisation has explored Spiritual Health in the following ways quoted from Wikipedia

## **Spiritual health** [\[ edit \]](#)

**Spiritual Health** is one of four dimensions to well-being as defined by the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO), which include physical, social, and mental.

The preamble to Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) adopted by the International Health Conference held in New York from 19 June to 22 July 1946 and signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States<sup>[43]</sup> defined health as a state of "physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"<sup>[44]</sup> and it has not been amended.

However, in 1983 twenty-two WHO member countries from the Eastern Mediterranean Region proposed a draft resolution to this preamble to include reference to spiritual health, such that it would redefine health as a state of "physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".<sup>[45]</sup>

Whilst WHO did not amend the preamble to its constitution, resolution WHA31.13 passed by the Thirty-seventh World Health Assembly, in 1984<sup>[46]</sup> called upon Member States to consider including in their [Health For All](#) strategies a spiritual dimension as defined in that resolution in accordance with their own social and cultural patterns <sup>[47]</sup> recognizing that "the spiritual dimension plays a great role in motivating people's achievements in all aspects of life".<sup>[48]</sup>

The complete description of the spiritual dimension as articulated by the Health Assembly is as follows:

The spiritual dimension is understood to imply a phenomenon that is not material in nature, but belongs to the realm of ideas, beliefs, values and ethics that have arisen in the minds and conscience of human beings, particularly ennobling ideas. Ennobling ideas have given rise to health ideals, which have led to a practical strategy for Health for All that aims at attaining a goal that has both a material and non-material component. If the material component of the strategy can be provided to people, the non-material or spiritual one is something that has to arise within people and communities in keeping with their social and cultural patterns. The spiritual dimension plays a great role in motivating people's achievement in all aspects of life.<sup>[49]</sup>

Since the inclusion of spiritual health within WHO's purview, a number of other significant organizations have also attended to spirituality and incorporated reference to it in key documents, including the [United Nations](#) action plan [Agenda 21](#)<sup>[50]</sup> which recognizes the right of individuals to "healthy physical, mental, and spiritual development".<sup>[51]</sup>

Thank you for considering these points,

Dr Owen Lewis

General Practitioner

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