CARITAS CONSCIOUSNESS AND CARITAS CONNECTIONS: EDUCATING, ENGAGING, AND INVITING NON-NURSING HEALTH CARE PRACTITIONERS INTO CARING SCIENCE PHILOSOPHY AND PRACTICE

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Introduction: Caring Science, created by Dr. Jean Watson, a registered nurse, is a nursing theory and model for nursing practice and has been adopted and implemented into hospital systems around the world. Caring Science as a philosophy, practice, ethic and language also has potential to offer transformational perspectives and practices for health care professionals outside nursing. Health care systems comprise professionals who provide a myriad of essential skills and services. Many of these professionals have a passion and yearning for finding greater meaning and depth in their own consciousness and in their health care vocations.

It is the opinion and experience of this writer that there is an emerging opportunity for Caring Science to find a voice and practice in non-nursing health care practices. Jean Watson writes, “As we evolve and attend to more fully developing and expanding a model of Caring Science, we are also contributing to evolution of a moral community that is based on common human bonds of trust and love, not fear. So, there is an increasing need to acknowledge the relationship between caring/love and peace in our lives and our world” (Watson, 2005, p. 142). Could it be that an aspect of this expanding model of Caring Science calls for non-nursing professionals to be educated, engaged and invited into the Caring Science philosophy and practice? The following project proposes to answer this question.

Significance: The significance of such a project is that by explicitly educating, engaging and inviting non-nursing health care professionals into the philosophy, ethic and practice of the Caring Science model, the philosophy itself begins to reflect and embody its own holistic principles. An inclusive Caring Science model is not only important, but essential in providing additional layers of support, perspective, strength, synergy, and transformative influence in the Caring Science movement. As the body of practitioners of Caring Science grows, the movement and philosophy of Caring Science has the potential to amplify and synergistically spread Caring Consciousness throughout health care institutions and health care itself.

Purpose: The first objective of this project is to educate, engage and invite health care professionals and service providers from multi-disciplinary perspectives into a Caring Science philosophy and practice. Health care practitioners from disciplines such as social work, volunteer services, spiritual care, art therapy, respiratory therapy, pharmacy, administrative services and the many other health care disciplines, have the potential to be contributing members of this expanding model of Caring Science.

The second objective of this project is to communicate and connect Caring Science philosophy, both explicitly and implicitly, to the Children’s Hospital community in Aurora, Colorado. At the Children’s Hospital there are programs and practices that are a direct result of implementing a Caring Science philosophy and practice and other programs and practices that are complimentary, related and contributory toward a more loving and caring hospital community.
Setting and Participants: The setting is The Children’s Hospital (TCH) in Aurora, Colorado. The participants have a connection, interest, or working relationship with THC and also an interest and affinity with Caring Science and/or spiritual development and self care.

Project Description/Process: A multi-disciplinary team from the TCH community, called Caritas Circle, is being assembled to meet monthly. The focus of the gathering will be on spiritual development, development of Caritas Literacy, and Caring Science oriented reflections. The group will enjoy a shared leadership and promote the philosophy that each of us is both student and teacher as we grow in our Caritas Consciousness. The focus is also on “Being” Caritas. TCH Caritas Coaches will provide support, facilitation and expertise. The aim of the gathering is to engage and embody Caritas Consciousness and to cultivate an expanding web of Caritas connection that includes, but is not limited to nursing.

A web of Caritas communication is also being developed to create linkage between Caring Science projects and programs and the many other related and complimentary projects and programs that contribute to well-being, spiritual growth, presence, great customer service, self care etc. This web of communication includes an intranet web site that is being developed to help increase communication about Caring Science Philosophy and practices, as well as other programs and events. This webpage will include Caring Science presentations, Caring Science articles, hospital wide self/spiritual care offerings and Caritas Coach and Caritas Circle contact information.

Project Evaluation: The success of the project should be its own evaluation. As non-nurse health care workers become educated, engaged and invited to participate in Caring Science, Caring Science philosophy and language will be more recognized by non-nursing providers. Caritas Circle participants will provide feedback about their own experience of Caritas Consciousness and its impact within their various disciplines. Caritas Circle participants will also see the need for Caritas Coach education within their own disciplines. Communication of hospital-wide activities will see in an increase in participation of such offerings.

Project Outcome: Individuals from various health care professions have expressed interest in participating in the Caritas Circle. It is scheduled to begin in late fall. The Intranet Website is also under development. I continue to write newsletter articles, speak to various TCH staff and invite individuals to participate in the Caritas Circle.

Future Directions: Caritas Circles have the potential to grow and continue to engage all individuals working in a health care system. They will continue to create a larger web of Caritas connection and engagement. Intranet communication, education, teaching Caritas principles will continue to help health care workers in their various fields find their own sense of meaning, purpose and Caritas Consciousness which will further develop Caring Science.

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