Spirituality and Spiritual Care in the Deployed Australian Military Nursing Context:

A Hermeneutic of Understanding

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SUMMARY

An increasing body of literature has emerged on spirituality and spiritual care in a variety of acute, chronic and palliative care nursing settings. However, there is a paucity of research into spirituality in military nursing populations. The literature confirmed the continuing lack of a unified definition of spirituality. Further, it identified that spirituality is positively associated with resilience in the face of adversity.

This work addressed an identified gap in the literature by seeking to understand how Australian military nurses experienced spirituality and spiritual care in a unique deployed operational context. The researcher conducted phenomenological interviews of ten Australian military nurses, underpinned by the Philosophical Hermeneutics of Gadamer.

The analysis indicated that family and community support the spiritual needs of military personnel when at home and transfer that responsibility to the military family when deployed.

A new model of spiritual care was developed based on the findings of study and incorporated elements of an earlier model of spirituality by the researcher. The model was produced to improve the awareness and delivery of spiritual care of Australian military nurses on deployment.

The study confirmed the centrality of the military nurse, throughout the continuum of deployment (pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment), to the delivery spiritual care. Further, it identified the reciprocal nature of spiritual care that assisted the nurse to also cope with the stressors of deployment.

Having identified the dangers and other challenges that deployed military operations present to the provision of spiritual nursing care, the research suggested that spirituality and spiritual care may provide positive benefits in protecting against the long-term psychological, emotional and spiritual impacts of military service on deployed operations.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

……

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