

# Editorial

## Military Chaplaincy, Moral Injury, Pastoral Narrative Disclosure, Bereavement and Spiritual Research Contamination

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**Abstract:** This issue of *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* presents research regarding the work of Ukrainian military chaplains at war. It also presents findings from the Australian Chaplaincy Moral Injury Skills Training (MIST) and Pastoral Narrative Disclosure (PND) programme for health and social care chaplains caring for veterans and/or first responder personnel on how to address issues relating to their occupational moral injury. In line with these topics, this issue also considers chaplaincy within the healthcare context providing support for families experiencing bereavement following a major trauma. Last, and by no means least, a warning is presented regarding the increasing use of contaminated scales in spirituality-related research.

**Keywords:** bereavement, military chaplaincy, moral injury, pastoral care, pastoral narrative disclosure, spirituality scale contamination

### Introduction

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the subsequent atrocities it incurred are reminiscent of World War II. What is also similar is the response of the churches and clergy in fulfilling chaplaincy roles, to ensure that pastoral care is being undertaken across the war-torn frontlines. Jan Grimell, a Senior Lecturer and Sociologist at Umeå University and Research Fellow at

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Linnaeus University, Sweden, has undertaken the first exploratory and noteworthy research among Ukrainian military chaplains (MCs) at war, which is presented in a two-part series. Part 1 provides an introductory background to the Russo-Ukraine War and the role of the churches, with some preliminary qualitative data based on Ukrainian MC experiences. Part 2 provides more detailed qualitative data that consider both the non-combat and combat duties of MCs, and the various lessons learned from their encounters during war. Both parts provide current and unique insights into the chaplaincy work of some of the most experienced wartime MCs.

### **Moral Injury and Pastoral Narrative Disclosure**

A related topic to that of chaplains at war is the consequences of moral injury and the subsequent development of various rehabilitation programmes available to war veterans and other frontline personnel (e.g. police, paramedics, healthcare clinicians). One such programme is presented in this issue, namely, that of “Pastoral Narrative Disclosure” (PND; Carey et al., 2024), which is an intervention strategy developed by chaplains to address moral injury (Carey & Hodgson, 2018; Carey et al., 2023a).

This is not the first time that the topic of moral injury (MI) has been noted in *HSCC*. A previous issue (*HSCC*, 11.1) published a two-part series defining and discussing the syndrome of moral injury (Carey et al., 2023b; Davies, 2023a, 2023b). Previous book reviews on the subject of MI have also been published in *HSCC*. One review related to Bishop Tom Frame’s (2015) anthology, *Moral Injury: Unseen Wounds in an Age of Barbarism* (see Swift, 2017). A second review considers the text by Lee (2018) *Moral Injury Reconciliation* (see Mercer, 2023). A third review explores the work of international foreign war correspondent Dean Yates, *Line in the Sand* (2023), who was subsequently treated for PTSD and MI (see Carey, 2023). Further there is the review of Nikki Jamieson’s book on moral injury called *Darkest before Dawn* (2023) published in this *HSCC* issue (Bakhurst & Carey, 2024).

This issue presents the evaluations of Australian health and welfare community chaplains regarding a three-part Australian Defence Force Chaplaincy Moral Injury Skills Training (MIST) programme, culminating in various community chaplains being trained in PND (MIST-3-PND). Similar to the evaluations by military chaplains regarding MIST-3-PND (Carey et al., 2023a), the Australian community chaplains also rated the MIST-3-PND programme highly, which the authors argue justifies the utilization of PND not only by military chaplains, but also among community chaplains, and warrants that further effectiveness research be undertaken (Carey et al., 2024).

## **Bereavement and Chaplaincy Support**

Kevern and colleagues utilize a case series method to consider the various influences affecting bereaved family uptake of chaplaincy support when viewing a deceased person. While there have been other *HSCC* articles considering bereavement (e.g. Carmichael, 2013; Lyttle, 2013; Wimpenny et al., 2013), research regarding bereavement and the role of chaplains is nevertheless limited. The aim of this study was to examine factors that might influence the decision to accept or refuse the offer of chaplaincy support following the sudden or unexpected death from natural causes of an adult relative. Listing four main findings, the authors conclude that offers of support (particularly prayer) are dependent upon the biographical, temporal, social and religious context.

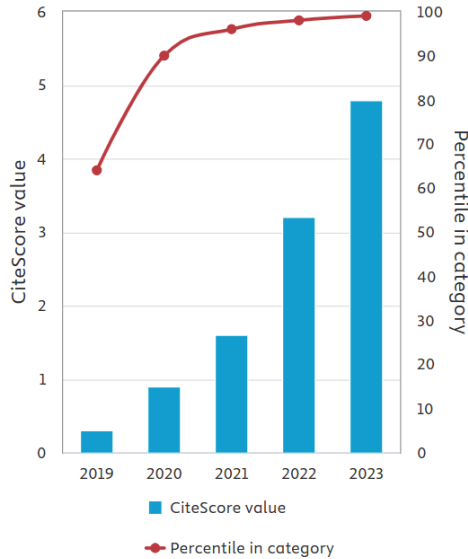
## **Spirituality Scale Contamination**

Finally, an important topic challenging all spirituality-related research is that of scale contamination (Bambling, 2024). Given the difficulties in defining spirituality, there has been an increasing tendency to justify the relevance, influence and importance of spirituality by associating its measurement with other variables (e.g. mental health and social health), which can confound analysis and lead to misleading results and conclusions. Based on the work of Koenig and Carey (2024), Bambling argues that spirituality research which uses scales that are contaminated (even well-known and often utilized scales) will produce misleading results if not handled carefully and therefore should be avoided; otherwise, the consequences may be detrimental with regard to decision-making. Perhaps the old adage that “prevention is better than cure” is also applicable to psychometric scales. Nevertheless, a cure has also been proposed by Koenig and Carey (2025) when contaminated scales are mistakenly used.

## **Health and Social Care Chaplaincy Review**

It has been a challenging year for *HSCC*, mainly due to authors and reviewers not responding in a timely manner with respect to submissions. This has caused considerable delays both in terms of submission to production timing and final publication of the current issue. Nevertheless, with the upcoming special issue on digital health and the assistance of additional guest editors and reviewers, *HSCC* is looking at a highly productive year in 2025.

*Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* can celebrate another successful year with respect to its improved citation factor and improved ranking since 2022.



**Figure 1:** SCOPUS results for Health and Social Care Chaplaincy citation scores (2019–2023)

The journal is assessed according to three thematic categories, namely, “Religious studies”, “Health (social sciences)” and “Social psychology”. Its overall citation score has increased rapidly since 2019 (SCOPUS CiteScore 2019: 0.3) to achieve a significantly higher overall citation score in 2023 (SCOPUS CiteScore 2023: 4.8), which is a further improvement from the 2022 citation score (SCOPUS CiteScore 2022: 3.2) (see Figure 1).

*Health and Social Care Chaplaincy*’s journal ranking has consequently also improved substantially. In the category of “Health (social sciences)”, it has achieved an improved ranking of 79 ( $n = 79/371$ ), compared to 2022 (SCOPUS 2022 “Health (social sciences)” ranking:  $n = 117/344$ ). Likewise, in “Social psychology”, *HSCC*’s ranking is now 86 ( $n = 86/310$ ), compared to 2022 (SCOPUS 2022 “Social psychology” ranking:  $n = 131/302$ ). The most outstanding achievement, however, has once again been in the category of “Religious studies”. *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* has excelled, achieving a ranking of fourth in 2023 ( $n = 4/644$ ), compared to 2022 (SCOPUS 2022 “Religious studies” ranking:  $n = 8/584$ ). The journal is now ranked internationally in the “Top 5” of religious studies journals (see Table 1). This is an outstanding achievement. However, given the delays in author revisions and reviewer responses during 2024, and thus delays in online publication, it is anticipated that both citation score and ranking will drop substantially for 2024 and 2025.

**Table 1:** *Religious studies journals – highest 20 ranking and CiteScore (SCOPUS 2022, 2023) (n = 644)*

Current rank 2023	Source title	CiteScore 2023	CiteScore 2022
#1	<a href="#">Sociology of Religion</a>	7.5	5.3
#2	<a href="#">Journal of Religion and Health</a>	5.4	4.8
#3	<a href="#">Psychology of Religion and Spirituality</a>	5.3	4.8
#4	<b>Health and Social Care Chaplaincy (rank 2022 #8)</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>3.3</b>
#5	<a href="#">The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion</a>	4.2	4.3
#6	<a href="#">Journal of Moral Education</a>	3.9	3.6
#7	<a href="#">Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</a>	3.9	3.4
#8	<a href="#">Ahkam: Jurnal Ilmu Syariah</a>	3.3	*
#9	<a href="#">Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies</a>	3.1	2.2
#10	<a href="#">Religion, Brain and Behavior</a>	3.0	2.9
#11	<a href="#">Politics and Religion</a>	3.0	2.3
#12	<a href="#">Secularism and Nonreligion</a>	2.9	2.2
#13	<a href="#">Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy (rank 2022 #11)</a>	2.9	2.9
#14	<a href="#">Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health</a>	2.9	2.5
#15	<a href="#">Ijtihad: Jurnal Wacana Hukum Islam dan Kemanusiaan</a>	2.7	*
#16	<a href="#">British Journal of Religious Education</a>	2.6	2.4
#17	<a href="#">Juris: Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah</a>	2.6	*
#18	<a href="#">Review of Religious Research</a>	2.5	*
#19	<a href="#">Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies</a>	2.5	*
#20	<a href="#">Journal for the Study of Spirituality</a>	2.5	*

Note: \* Journal not previously listed in highest journal rankings for 2022.

## Book Reviews

This issue contains four book reviews, all of which are open access:

- Chapa, J. O. (2022). *Is Remote Warfare Moral? Weighing issues of life + death from 7,000 miles*, reviewed by Professor Darren Cronshaw.
- Grebe, M. and Grössl, J. (2023). *T&T Clark Handbook of Suffering and the Problem of Evil*, reviewed by Rev. Dr. Chris Swift.
- Jamieson, N. (2023). *Darkest Before Dawn: Australian Veterans' Accounts of Moral Injury*, reviewed by Dr. Melissa Bakhurst and Dr. Lindsay B. Carey
- Klitzman, R. L. (2024). *Doctor, Will You Pray for Me? Medicine, Chaplains, and Healing the Whole Person*, reviewed by Dr. Jacob M. Appel.

- Swinton, J., and MacKinlay, E. (Eds.) (2023). *Still Waters Run Deep: Theological Reflections on Dementia, Faithfulness and Peaceable Presence*, reviewed by Rev. Ben Boland.

## Epilogue and Acknowledgments

Readers are reminded of an upcoming special *HSCC* issue regarding the new era of digital care. Please see the ‘Call for Papers’ in this issue or proceed to the following *HSCC* link: <https://journal.equinoxpub.com/HSCC/announcement/view/386>

Although somewhat belatedly, the Editor-in-Chief would like to conclude this issue with thanks to all *HSCC* Co-Editors (in alphabetical order by surname), Rebecca Adams, Rev. Fran Kissack, Rev. Dr. Mark Newitt, Rev. Dr. Daniel Nuzum, Professor Piret Paal, Joanne Pike and finally Rev. Dr. Chris Swift, for their contributions to *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy*. Appreciation is also expressed to members of the *HSCC* Editorial Board for undertaking (when available) the often-challenging task of manuscript reviews, and finally, once again, thanks go to Ailsa Parkin (Equinox Press) and Tom Fryer and his colleagues at Sparks Publishing Services (Gloucestershire, UK). Appreciation is also acknowledged for the support and contributions of the College of Health Care Chaplains (CHCC, UK), Spiritual Care Australia (SCA), New Zealand Healthcare Chaplains’ Association (NZHCA) and the European Research Institute for Chaplains in Healthcare (ERICH).

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