

Review Group Membership

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**Background**

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, medicine, religion and science were considered by the academic, scientific and medical communities to be separate realms of thought whose presentation in the same text leads to misunderstanding of both. Research indicated that religiosity (religious activities, religious beliefs), spiritual beliefs and practices were widespread among American population and that these beliefs and practices had clinical relevance. Therefore, towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, professional organizations increasingly called for greater sensitivity and better training of clinicians concerning the management of religious and spiritual issues in the assessment and treatment of these patients; these organizations included the American Psychiatric Association in 1989, the American Psychological Association 1992, The accreditation Council for graduate Medical Education in 1994, The Council on Social Work Education in 1995, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organization in 1996, The American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP) in 1997, the American College of Physicians in 1998 and the Association of American Medical Colleges in 1998.

In Islam, the term spirituality is inseparable from the awareness of the One, of Allah (God), and a life lived according to His Will. This principle of Oneness (Al-tawheed – unity) must be taken into consideration in any study of Islamic spirituality. For Muslims the Qur'an 'is a guide and gives healing to those who believe' (Chapter 41, verse 44). The religion and the tradition of an individual's faith therefore plays an important and very significant role in satisfying the physical as well as the spiritual needs of human beings. Culliford mentioned that, unfortunately, religious, moral and ethical values have been declining in today's society. Families are falling apart, crime and the divorce rate are increasing sharply, and substance misuse and excessive sexual indulgence are common in adolescents and young adults. These factors lead to conflicts, resentment and the loss of self-respect, loneliness, depression, anxiety and a host of psychological symptoms. Sajid A, Baloch SO and Din H mentioned that the Islamic principles that are based on the Qur'an and Hadith are the best form of prevention and treatment of many diseases including emotional disturbances and depression. From the Islamic point of view, one approach to disease management is the use of *dua* – prayer from the Qur'an (Chapter 17, verse 82) and Hadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet (peace is upon him)). There should be no dichotomy between the spiritual and physical. Each cures the disease using a different pathway. According to Sajid A, it is a mistake to use one and reject the other. This technology was requested by the Director of the Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division, Ministry of Health, Malaysia to look into the evidence on Spiritual Therapy that encompasses religiosity.

**Objective/Aim**

The objective of this systematic review was to assess the efficacy / effectiveness, safety and economic implication of spiritual therapy as a complement therapy to standard treatment for patients with mental disorders such as anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, mental stress, insomnia or headache.

**Results and Conclusions**

A total of 1105 titles were identified through the Ovid interface and PubMed. Eight articles related to the effect of spiritual therapy on mental disorders were included in this review consisting of one systematic review and seven cross sectional studies. The studies were conducted in United States and United Kingdom.

The majority of the studies were of observational, cross-sectional design which did not allow drawing any definitive conclusions about the causal relationships of the variables. Most of the studies are limited by the nature of the population studied and short duration of study. However, a systematic review showed that Intercessory prayer (IP) may improve health outcomes by lowering severity scores of patients, Islamic-based psychotherapy and religious activities speeds recovery from anxiety and depression in Muslim patients. Most of the studies showed that involvement in religious activities, religious beliefs, spiritual beliefs and practices may promote mental and physical health such as lowering the scores in depression and anxiety. Most of the findings suggested potential benefit namely religious quality involvement was protective through personal and meditative aspects for depression anxiety and schizophrenia. However, the long term effects of spiritual therapy for mental health disorders could not be determined. Hence, there is a need for more research in this area to gauge the beneficial effect of spiritual therapy and religiosity (aspects of religious activity, dedication, and belief), spiritual beliefs and practices has on health outcomes as an adjunctive treatment in patients with mental disorders such as anxiety, depression and schizophrenia

**Methods**

Electronic databases were searched through the Ovid interface: Ovid MEDLINE<sup>®</sup> In-process and other Non-indexed citations and Ovid MEDLINE<sup>®</sup> 1948 to present, EBM Reviews - Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials – Mac 2015, EBM Reviews - Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews - 2000 to

Mac 2015, EBM Reviews - Health Technology Assessment – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015, EBM Reviews - Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015, Embase – 1988 to 2015 week 10. Searches were also run in PubMed. Google was used to search for additional web-based materials and information. Additional articles were identified from reviewing the references of retrieved articles. Last search was conducted on 9<sup>th</sup> Mac 2015.