

Health Ministry can take many forms

by Carol Sullivan

As a parish nurse, every once in a while someone who has come in contact with the health ministry says something to the effect that they previously thought I “just took blood pressures.” One person even added, “I didn’t know you were actually useful to people.” Sigh!

While I happen to think that knowing one’s blood pressure and taking steps to get it under control is useful, health ministry can take a myriad of different forms. The purpose is always whole person wellness, body, mind, and spirit, given freely and abundantly as God’s love is given freely and abundantly to us. Our entire health care delivery system can be considered in this light of giving from abundance. Health care in the United States is so abundant that our per capita costs are the highest of anywhere in the world.

Is this outlay generously providing us with an abundance of health? I think not. Our infant mortality rate is abysmal. Forty-seven countries do it better. The longevity of our citizens is forty-second in the world. Of the G8 industrialized nations, we rank flat last in both categories. One reason for this is that a majority of our health care dollars are spent in the ICU. The fact is that most of the persons in the ICU could have had their disease prevented or ameliorated by far fewer dollars spent far earlier on.

Health ministry includes education, assessment, referral, advocacy, emotional support and spiritual care. Advocacy for a better health care delivery system is another form of health ministry. This can take a political form, or be on a more personal level, such as helping with health care access through transportation, supporting persons (including yourself) in healthy life-style choices, or walking with someone on a difficult part of their journey.

To learn more about how health ministry could make a difference in your parish, contact the Diocese of Easton Liaison to the National Episcopal Health Ministries, Carol Sullivan, at 410-827-6907 or email songofjoy@dmv.com. I would be glad to do a program in your parish!

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