

FOREWORD

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It is with great pleasure that I am penning some thoughts on the 3rd International Conference “*Spirituality: The Human Dimension in Care*” that was held in Malta on the 25th and 26th October 2007. I would, first and foremost, like to take this opportunity to thank Dr Donia Baldacchino and the Division of Nursing and Midwifery for successfully organizing this conference. I would also like to thank all the participants for sharing their talents and for transforming this conference into a worthwhile experience.

The aims of this conference were to help us understand the meaning of *spirituality* and *spiritual care*, as well as the integration of the spiritual dimension within the definition of holistic care. Furthermore, the conference made us aware of the current research on spirituality in patient care, thereby projecting the subject firmly on an evidence-based platform.

These aims were captured in the logo of the conference, namely a flying/active dove symbolizing peace. And indeed, we need to feel at peace with ourselves in our delivery of care, in our communication with patients and with our colleagues. This brings me on to state what spirituality means to me and I believe what it means to all of us: Spirituality is the physical, psychological, social and cultural aspects of our life, integrated harmoniously with the scope of finding meaning and purpose in our life, based on the values of love, truthfulness, trust, dedication and altruism.

This was clearly demonstrated by *the nursing and midwifery students' drama*, which originated from their study unit on *The General Principles of Health and Illness*, and which helped us reflect on our daily patient care, as well as on the real-life experiences of *suffering* experienced by patients. The conference also included the participation of various artists, who despite being faced by problems in life, managed to go beyond themselves, accepted their inconveniences in life, empowered themselves, and managed to look positively into the future as demonstrated by their arts and self-development. Furthermore, the various speakers, both local and foreign, made us aware of the holistic needs of patients, and of how our noble caring professions offer us the opportunity to provide the spiritual dimension in care. Last but not least, I remember the conference song *No Greater Gift*, which was ably composed by Ms Therese Bugeja, who managed to summarise and translate *spiritual dimension in care* in an artistic manner for all of us to treasure and remember throughout our professional life.

I sincerely believe that the Institute of Health Care portrays itself as a model of best educational practice, in not only providing academic and professional education and training, but in doing so with a spiritual dimension. I sincerely hope that these conferences are learning experiences for our professional development at present and in the future.