DEPARTMENT OF PATIENT COUNSELING

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Professor and chair

Patient counseling is the practice of communicating emphatic concern, support and sensitive spiritual counsel to the physically or emotionally troubled person in the traumas of life. There is a long history of a concerted effort toward this end at VCU Health. With the appointment of Dr. George D. Ossman as chaplain in 1943, the administration gave clear evidence of its awareness of the need for a specialized caring ministry to hospitalized patients and their families.

The chaplaincy program was significantly expanded in 1958 and was accredited to begin the education and clinical training of persons in patient counseling. Since then, a continuous program has been in existence and has evolved into the present program in patient counseling. Patient counseling, as it exists today, became an integrated program in the then-School of Allied Health Professions in 1970. A comprehensive curriculum review was completed in 1999.

With the rapid growth of health care and the increasingly complex problems of medical ethics and viable delivery systems, it is very important to educate qualified persons to deal with the human dimensions of illness as well as the personal and family stressors related to it. Through this program, VCU has an opportunity to make an impact upon health care education by emphasizing the spiritual dimension of human needs in life crises. By so doing, this university has a significant role to play in the important task of keeping health care holistic and utilizing technical and scientific methodology in the context of a deep respect for the total life of persons.

Accreditation

The program is accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education Inc (https://www.acpe.edu/). and is offered in collaboration with VCU Health. Virginia Commonwealth University/VCU Health is accredited to offer CPE (Levels I/II) and Supervisory CPE by the ACPE, 1549 Clairmont Road, Suite 103, Decatur, Georgia, 30033; (404) 320-1472.

Objectives

The programs in patient counseling are designed to assist an individual to work in the health field as one skilled in dealing with the whole person in the context of life’s crises and in a cooperative interprofessional team approach. The programs are offered to persons who have an existing identity in a helping or counseling profession. This includes clergy, social workers, institutional counselors, education specialists, psychologists, community health workers and others in the health care professions.

Facilities

West Hospital (W4S) is the base for the educational program, and limited space is available in clinical areas to work with persons and families in crisis. The Main Hospital, mezzanine level, contains the chapel, family consultation room and administrative offices.

Code of ethics

The professional behavior of the student is expected to be in accordance with the Code of Professional Ethics, as adopted by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. and the Code of Ethics of the Association of Professional Chaplains.

Student responsibilities

Students serve in the dual capacity of providing pastoral care service while learning. Extensive clinical involvement, including night and weekend responsibilities, is required for selected courses and clinical pastoral education credit. Each student receives individual supervision by a member of the faculty.

Students who are unsuccessful in demonstrating completion of designated clinical pastoral education outcomes in any program will be required to develop with a faculty mentor an individualized plan of study toward their completion. Typically, this plan will be accomplished through additional course work or a directed independent study.

Continuation requirements, advising, transfer and part-time status

A student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in all course work completed at VCU. A student who falls below that minimum will have one semester to remedy the deficiency.

A student must register for at least one credit hour each academic year for continuation in the program. Any student who fails to register must have prior approval to do so or be dropped from the program and must reapply for reinstatement.

There is a five calendar-year maximum for students to complete the Master of Science degree and a seven calendar-year maximum for the dual degree. The graduate certificate program must be completed within a four calendar-year maximum. Part-time students who wish to accumulate concurrent ACPE credit need to be sure that course work is completed in accordance with ACPE standards.

A maximum of eight credits may be transferred from another university toward the Master of Science course requirements provided these credits have not been applied to a previous degree. A maximum of one-third of the didactic hours may be transferred from another VCU program. Dual-degree candidates may apply six credits from their seminary studies to the VCU degree. Transfer is given at the discretion of the chair after consultation with the faculty, subject to university approval. Credits are not transferable to either of the certificate programs.

Students who have been admitted to the graduate certificate program may be admitted to the Master of Science degree with advanced standing after the completion of at least 18 credits with a B or better. All credits of a B or better will transfer to the degree program.

Upon admission to all programs students will be assigned a faculty adviser.

- Patient Counseling, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in accelerated chaplain certification (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/patient-counseling/patient-counseling-ms-accelerated-chaplain-certification-concentration/)
- Patient Counseling, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in chaplain certification (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/patient-counseling/patient-counseling-ms-concentration-chaplain-certification/)
- Patient Counseling, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in supervisory clinical pastoral education (http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/patient-counseling/
PATC 501. Introduction to Health Care Ministry. 1 Hour.
Semester course; 1 lecture and 1 practicum hours. 1 credit. Introduces the student to the hospital environment through observation, reading and reflection. Taught jointly with seminary faculty. Required course for dual degree program.

PATC 510. Introduction to Patient Counseling. 3-5 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture and optional clocked clinical hours. 3-5 credits. Introduces the student to the development and practice of spiritual care of patients and families. Includes case review and peer interaction. Assignment to the hospital is available to those seeking clinical pastoral education credit. Designed for the nonspecialist.

PATC 511. The Professional Caregiver. 4 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours and 150 clocked clinical hours. 4 credits. Prerequisite: PATC 510. Focuses upon development of professional identity and growth within the helping professions. Emphasizes the context of the health-care environment and its impact upon caregivers, patients and families. Includes practical application of theory. Incorporates the use of clinical material. Designed for the nonspecialist.

PATC 515. Basic Patient Counseling. 9 Hours.
7 lecture and 300 clocked clinical hours. 9 credits. Provides an intensive course of study toward the development of pastoral skills in the hospital context. Assigns students to select clinical areas with faculty supervision. Utilizes group process and individual supervision for the review of clinical material.

PATC 551. Selected Issues in Health Care. 1 Hour.
Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. May be repeated to a maximum of 2 credits. Exposes the student to a number of current trends and topics relevant to the contemporary U.S. health care delivery system. Content changes from semester to semester. Utilizes expertise of hospital personnel.

PATC 592. Independent Study in Patient Counseling. 1-4 Hours.
Semester course; variable hours. 1-4 credits. May be repeated for a maximum of 4 credits. Provides opportunity to increase clinical and interpersonal skills in specialty areas through patient care, parallel reading and individual faculty supervision.

PATC 611. Theory and Practice of Patient Counseling I. 5 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture and 300 clocked clinical hours. 5 credits. Prerequisite: PATC 515 or equivalent. Emphasizes the theological foundations of pastoral care and counseling. Provides an in-depth examination of clinical material in a seminar setting.

PATC 612. Theory and Practice of Patient Counseling II. 5 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture and 300 clocked clinical hours. 5 credits. Prerequisite: PATC 515 or equivalent. Emphasizes psychological foundations of pastoral care and counseling. Provides an in-depth examination of clinical material in a seminar setting.

PATC 613. Group Process I. 2 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Prerequisite: PATC 515 or equivalent. Explores, in a small group setting, the dynamics common to group behavior. Reflects upon the use of group process learning. Utilizes an experiential method of learning.

PATC 614. Group Process II. 2 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Prerequisite: PATC 515 or equivalent. Focuses upon the various theories of group process. Focuses upon application of theory to a variety of clinical and administrative settings. Utilizes an experiential method of learning.

PATC 615. Theory of Group Leadership. 2 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Prerequisite: PATC 613 or 614. Explores various theories of group leadership. Provides opportunity to test skill development within a peer context.

PATC 617. Supervised Clinical Practice I. 5 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture and 300 clocked clinical hours. 5 credits. Prerequisites: PATC 611 and 612. Provides the opportunity to apply and practice pastoral care skills with patients and their families under faculty supervision. Emphasizes professional competence toward an integration of theological, psychological and sociological aspects of spiritual care in varied clinical contexts.

PATC 618. Supervised Clinical Practice II. 5 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture and 300 clocked clinical hours. 5 credits. May be repeated for a total of 10 credits. Prerequisites: PATC 611 and 612. Provides the opportunity to apply and practice pastoral care skills in a pastoral care specialty under faculty supervision. Utilizes university and hospital personnel in specialty areas.

PATC 619. Spiritual and Social Integration Seminar. 1 Hour.
Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. This course is a summary course required for persons in the dual-degree program. Provides in-depth reflection on the theological and social implications of ministry within the health-care environment. Course is taught jointly with seminary faculty.

PATC 620. Religious and Social Factors in Patient Counseling. 2 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Provides an understanding of the theological and social factors related to hospitalization. Focuses on the use of ritual and tradition in caring for persons in crisis.

PATC 621. Care of the Dying. 2 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Explores the spiritual and psychological dynamics associated with loss for patients and families. Offers special attention to the emotional and spiritual impact on caregivers that work with dying patients. Includes the use of clinical material within a group experience.

PATC 627. Living Well. 2-3 Hours.
Semester course; 2 or 3 lecture hours. 2 or 3 credits. Focuses on the development, facilitation and leadership of support groups for bereaved families. Provides students the opportunity to increase interpersonal and clinical skills in supporting families who have experienced a significant death. Special attention is offered to the needs of children. Requires participation in "Living Well," a contracted component of VCU Health System’s bereavement program that utilizes art and group discussion.

PATC 629. Spirituality and Aging. 2-3 Hours.
Semester course; 2 or 3 lecture hours. 2 or 3 credits. Explores the spiritual, psychological and social dynamics associated with aging. Provides special attention to the spiritual and emotional impact on caregivers who work with aging patients. Crosslisted as: GRTY 629.
PATC 635. Clinical Ethics. 2-3 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2-3 credits. Applies the principles of biomedical and health-care ethics to a more informed understanding of ethical decision making in the clinical environment. Concerned with the identification, analysis and resolution of ethical problems that arise in planning for the care of patients. Emphasizes the ethical responsibilities of clinical and pastoral caregivers.

PATC 636. Professional Identity and Ethics. 2 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Focuses on guidelines for professional ethics in the development and maintenance of professional and personal integrity, leadership ability and the enhancement of a congruency between spiritual, psychological and physical maturity.

PATC 639. Pastoral Care Management. 2 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Surveys the theory and practice of pastoral-care management within the present health-care environment including personnel management, process improvement, benchmarking and qualitative research design. Taught cooperatively with hospital personnel.

PATC 640. Research Basics for Hospital Chaplains. 1 Hour.
Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. Provides an overview of research basics within the context of hospital chaplaincy. Emphasizes the methodological issues in health services research that involve hospital chaplains.

PATC 641. Evidence-based Inquiry for Hospital Chaplains. 1 Hour.
Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. Prerequisite: PATC 640. Provides an overview of data collection, data quality and data usage within the context of hospital chaplaincy. Emphasizes an understanding of the use of data by health services administrators in operational and strategic decisions and for performance improvement.

PATC 642. Developing and Presenting Chaplaincy Research. 1 Hour.
Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. Prerequisite: PATC 640. Provides an overview of how to analyze and present evidence-based project findings and recommendations within a hospital or academic environment. Emphasizes understanding different objectives and dissemination routes for evidence-based chaplaincy projects as well as demonstrating an understanding of dissemination of evidence-based project results to relevant audiences.

PATC 653. Patient Counseling Evaluation I. 4 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture and 6 practicum hours. 4 credits. Focuses upon the theory and practice of case based education and clinical evaluation relevant for pastoral supervision. Observation of and reflection upon the work of ACPE supervisors are required.

PATC 654. Patient Counseling Evaluation II. 4 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture and 6 practicum hours. 4 credits. Continues the theoretical and practical focus of PATC 653. Students move from observation to participation in clinical evaluation of pastoral care interns.

PATC 661. History of Pastoral Supervision. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Focuses on the history and development of clinical pastoral education as a movement. Exposes the student to theoretical basis of clinical pastoral education as established in professional and organizational standards.

PATC 663. Theory of Pastoral Supervision I. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Focuses on the literature in pastoral supervision. Emphasizes the applicability of educational and personality theory relevant for clinical pastoral education.

PATC 664. Theory of Pastoral Supervision II. 2 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Focuses on the literature related to cultural and gender factors relevant for pastoral supervision.

PATC 665. Selected Topics in Pastoral Supervision. 2 Hours.
2 lecture hours. 2 credits. May be repeated for a total of 4 credits. Presents a variety of topics on supervisory theory and practice for persons seeking certification by the ACPE. Utilizes ACPE supervisors as well as university and local seminary faculty.

PATC 692. Independent Study in Pastoral Supervision. 1-4 Hours.
Semester course; 1-4 credits. May be repeated for a total of 4 credits. Provides individual focus and direction of student readings in theories of pastoral supervision. Readings are selected from bibliography of the ACPE Certification Commission.

PATC 694. Advanced Clinical Pastoral Supervision. 7 Hours.
Semester course; 2 lecture and 15 practicum hours. 7 credits. Prerequisite: PATC 654. Advanced attention to integration of education and personality theories with theology. Includes the actual practice of supervision under faculty guidance. Restricted to individuals admitted to candidacy status in ACPE, Inc. May be repeated.

PATC 696. Intensive Supervisory Practicum. 9 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture and 18 practicum hours. 9 credits. Prerequisite: PATC 694. Provides opportunity for independent supervision of pastoral care interns with mentoring and evaluation by faculty. Utilizes ACPE supervisory personnel. Restricted to individuals admitted to candidacy status in ACPE. May be repeated.

PATC 697. Clinical Research. 1-5 Hours.
Semester course; 1-5 credits. May be repeated for a total of 5 credits. Provides the opportunity to test the practical application of research and process improvement methods within the clinical context. Encourages the development of collaborative and interdisciplinary project development.