

FICA: Taking a Spiritual History

The acronym FICA can help structure questions in taking a personal spiritual history.

F – Faith, Belief and Meaning

“Do you consider yourself spiritual or religious?” or “Do you have spiritual beliefs that help you cope with stress?” If the patient responds, “no,” the physician might ask, “What gives your life meaning?” Sometimes patients respond with answers such as family, career or nature.

I –Importance and Influence

“What importance does your faith or belief have in your life? Have your beliefs influenced how you take care of yourself in this illness? What role do your beliefs play in regaining your health?”

C –Community

“Are you part of a spiritual or religious community? Is this of support to you and how? Is there a group of people you really love or who are important to you?” Communities such as churches, temples, and mosques, or a group of like-minded friends, can serve as a strong support system for some patients.

A –Address/Action in Care

“How would you like me, your healthcare provider, to address these issues in your healthcare?” Often it is not necessary to ask this question but to think about what spiritual issues need to be addressed in the treatment plan. Examples include referral to chaplains, pastoral counselors, or spiritual directors, journaling, and music or art therapy. Sometimes the plan may be simply to listen and support the person in their journey.

Christina Pulchalski has developed an acronym, FICA, which can be used in performing a spiritual assessment. (Puchalski C, Romer AL. Journal of Palliative Medicine. 3(1): 129-137, 2000.)