

RESUMO - SAÚDE E ESPIRITUALIDADE

CARING BEYOND THE BODY: HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS AS A PATH TO INTEGRAL AND SPIRITUALLY SENSITIVE MEDICAL PRACTICE

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Introduction: Contemporary medical education demands the integration of technical competence with ethical, social, and spiritual dimensions, recognizing the human person as a unity of biological, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects. In contexts of vulnerability, where suffering frequently transcends the physical domain, addressing meaning, values, and spirituality becomes essential to truly integral care. Humanitarian missions emerge as a privileged educational setting for this integration. Objective: To analyze the contribution of humanitarian missions to the development of integral care with emphasis on spiritual sensitivity in medical education. Methods: Descriptive observational study in the form of an experience report based on missions conducted in vulnerable communities during 2024. Activities included spontaneous demand consultations and active door-to-door outreach, enabling the recognition of social, cultural, and spiritual determinants of health. Missions occurred semiannually, lasting three to four days, and involved multiprofessional teams. Care was provided by supervised student pairs. Results: The experience promoted not only technical

improvement and clinical reasoning in resource-limited settings, but also a profound transformation in the understanding of care. Students progressively adopted a person-centered approach, incorporating patients' values, beliefs, and spiritual needs into clinical encounters. This shift fostered empathy, compassion, and attentive listening, strengthening therapeutic bonds characterized by trust and openness. Addressing spiritual dimensions was perceived as enhancing patient well-being and the meaning attributed to care, even in the presence of material limitations. The immersive and multiprofessional environment stimulated ethical reflection and reinforced a sense of vocation, responsibility, and service. Challenges included reconciling participation with academic demands and the absence of longitudinal follow-up, exposing structural fragilities in continuity of care. Conclusion: Humanitarian missions constitute a transformative axis in medical education by integrating clinical practice with social commitment and spiritual sensitivity. More than a complementary activity, they reveal the centrality of recognizing the patient as a whole person, whose needs transcend the biological sphere. Incorporating such experiences into medical training is essential for the formation of physicians capable of delivering truly integral, ethical, and compassionate care, and of responding meaningfully to human suffering.

Palavras-chave: medical education; humanization of care; spirituality; medical missions.