
Abstract

Hospital chaplaincy is an important aspect of ministry which I believe in Ireland is under researched, acknowledged and valued. For many clergy, a hospital chaplaincy role becomes part of their duties because it falls within their parish boundary but there are others who are appointed to this role and have completed extra training. This study begins by taking an autoethnographical approach, where I outline my own experiences on receiving the ministry of the hospital chaplain. It develops to outlining what literature has to say, gathering perspectives from various sources including the NHS, RCN and theologians who have completed their own research on the theme.

Based on these findings from literature, gaps became clear, so a topic list for my qualitative research was formulated, and thirty-five prospective research participants were approached. Of these fifteen took part in either a video interview or online survey.

My analysis of the data found common themes running throughout the various participants. Of the participating chaplains, most see their role as a privilege, they recognise that they are a presence with a person when they are at their most vulnerable, they highlighted how communication was important. From undertaking this research, I uncovered some of the constraints of this ministry, these were centred on time and boundaries.

I concluded from my research that hospital chaplaincy is a worthwhile and vital ministry that is often overlooked and under resourced. I have offered my own recommendations on how I feel this ministry can be enhanced.