

Press Release

**Three Faiths Forum Middle East runs Education Programme for Jewish, Christian and Muslim Nursing Students at Hadassah Hospital, Jerusalem**

The Three Faiths Forum Middle East, a new branch of the Three Faiths Forum, held a large event yesterday at the nursing school of the prestigious Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. Over forty participants, consisting of nursing students, teachers and professionals, crowded into the auditorium at the nursing school for their first text study interfaith educational workshop. The workshop, compiled and facilitated by Miriam Feldmann Kaye, was created especially for the Hadassah nursing group, and comprised selected texts from the Tanakh, New Testament, Qur'an and later commentaries.

The group comprised around twenty Jewish students and teachers, ten Muslim students, Christian student, one Christian nun who had travelled from Abu Ghosh, Dr Anita Noble who coordinated the event, and Yehuda Stolov director of the Interfaith Encounter Association. Other participants included the head of the nursing department for leprosy (now termed....) who had much to comment on the Jewish text about Moses praying to God to heal his sister from leprosy. An additional Jewish Talmudic text introduced the theme of reward, punishment and sickness, and students contributed Jewish traditions of relations with healthcare, such as the tradition of Rabbi Nachman of Breslav. Muslim students spoke of the later commentator At-Tabarani, who wrote about God's creation only of treatment, and not of illness. The Christian texts on suffering led to fascinating discussion on the role of suffering in Christianity in general, and the involvement of God in the world in which we live.

It was an especially meaningful session as the theme of Healing and Suffering was directly related to the work and studies of the participants. Many examples of practice were offered where religious patients refused to be treated as they believed they had received their illness from God as either a punishment or a test. The precedent for such beliefs in all three religious traditions was discussed. The concept of the resurrection of the dead in Judaism, Christianity and Islam was discussed, with detailed explanations of burial practices and reasoning and beliefs behind the respective practices. Similarities but also important differences were found in the three faiths.

The group were eager to ask each other more general questions about their respective faiths, and it seemed that after years of studying and working together, this was just the beginning of student/colleague dialogue about their respective beliefs and traditions.

The discussion was conducted in Hebrew and English.

Dr Anita Noble commented;

I found this meeting to be very important. Cultural competence includes gaining knowledge of our patients' customs, laws and practices where many are based in the original text of their holy scriptures. The text provided led to many discussions pertaining to healing and suffering. Cultural competence theoretical frameworks were discussed as well as ways that we can communicate with our patients to elicit the cultural meanings attributed to their healing and suffering. It, also, provided a basis for further meetings to discuss how we can incorporate our patients' practices into their care.

Quotation from a student who participated in the meeting:

"I was very happy that I attended the meeting. It showed that while there are differences between people- there are so many similarities. Religious people of the 3 faiths all believe that healing and suffering come from G-d. Having an interfaith workshop for nursing students today allows us to learn about our own culture and other cultures. This is gives them us vital knowledge that we need when we work with patients – to put away stereotypes and understand cultural values and beliefs".

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