



Origins of Congregational Health Ministry

Every major religion acknowledges the relationship between physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Beginning in the 1970's in the U.S., nurses began to volunteer health and wellness information to the pastor, assist with finding health resources, and provide support to church members during illness. This ministry came to be known as parish nursing or congregational nursing.

Community of Christ hosted two conferences in the 1970's at the Auditorium with guest speaker Granger Westberg, the modern-day founder of the parish nurse movement. During the 1990's, formal congregational nursing programs were created in several Central Mission Center congregations and expanded to other areas of the U.S.

Continuing changes in health care systems and increasing health concerns challenge churches to be centers for healing and health. **Most frequently churches are the first place those in need turn to for support and guidance.**

Community of Christ Health Ministries Association is committed to help develop intentional health ministry in as many congregations as possible.

For more information contact 816-833-1000 ext 1262 or email HMA@CofChrist.org.



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What is the Role of a Congregational Health Ministry Program?

- H-** Health Counselors
- E-** Educators of wholistic health
- A-** Advocates/ Resource persons
- L-** Liaisons to community services
- T-** Teachers of volunteers, support groups
- H-** Healers: body, mind, and spirit

Ideally, a nurse should lead the congregational health ministry program. Other interested health professionals could be involved and expand the depth of knowledge, resources, and types of ministry. Granger Westberg recognized that doctors, dentists, pharmacists, technicians, therapists, dental hygienists, social workers, and dieticians enhance a program. Since nurses have traditionally been the “coordinator” of a patient’s care because of the bedside location, Westberg identified the nurse as the best coordinator of a program.

HMA would like to see a health minister as part of every congregational leadership team. The pastoral skills they might be able to contribute include:

- Ministry of presence
- Connecting the spiritual aspects of health and wholeness
- Listening and communication skills that lead to conflict and problem resolution
- Noting health problems and possible barriers to worship and congregational life participation
- Understanding the emotional and mental health needs of congregants
- Encouraging the sacrament of laying on of hands

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