



Information on Postgraduate Research Scholarship - Ref: HUS 02 20

Faculty: Education, Health and Human Sciences

Department: Human Sciences

Lead Supervisor: Dr Panagiotis Pentaris

Project Title: Inclusion and equity in end of life care: the case of religion, non-religion and spirituality

Project Description:

The proposed project aims to enhance service user experience in End of Life (EOL) care, in the context of growing religious and nonreligious diversity. EOL care takes place in an increasingly diverse environment, as far as religion, non-religion and spirituality are concerned. Alongside migration and globalisation, the changing religious landscape in the UK, has led professionals in EOL care, and EOL care organisational settings, to the demanding position of addressing religious plurality on a daily basis, which is one of the main concerns of this project.

Literature has modestly focused on the significance of religiously sensitive practice in EOL care. Largely, literature suggests that professionals are not particularly comfortable when working with service users from a different than theirs background (Pentaris, 2019a; Gilligan, 2013; Hodge, 2005), while more pragmatic (e.g. dietary requirements) or avoidant approaches are employed in practice (Pentaris and Thomsen, 2018). Daaleman and VandeCreek (2000) argued that the goal of EOL care includes the attendance to the service user's spiritual or religious needs. The authors, as well as other scholars, associate this need, at large, with the links between one's religion, spirituality and/or belief with end of life decision-making (Bülow et al., 2012; Sprung et al., 2007). Puchalski et al. (2009) have highlighted the need to advance spiritual care in hospice and palliative care, while Connor (2017) explores the practical aspects of spiritual care, and Pentaris (2019b) examines the various ways in which professionals can increase their skills and capacities in spiritually and religiously sensitive practice.

Dinham and Francis (2015) explore the necessity for religious literacy in policy and practice and suggest that religious literacy composes of both knowledge in the areas of religion and belief, as well as skills to adequately engage with service user identities. Pentaris (2019a) presents a fully-grown model of Religious Literacy in Hospice Care (RLHC) which suggests that professionals should acquire knowledge of service users' religious, spiritual or nonreligious identities, understanding of how those identities shape up the service user's character and personality and inform choice and lifestyle, as well as skills and abilities to properly address needs associated with those identities. The RLHC argues that RL in EOL care is only possible when practiced through a value-based framework, focusing on self-awareness, self-understanding, empathy and interpersonal skills. It is in the premise of this model that this project seeks to explore both organisational and professional religious literacy levels in EOL care.

This project aims to enhance service user experience in EOL care, in the context of growing religious and nonreligious diversity. The objectives of this project are directly linked with its aim:

- Explore religious literacy in frontline EOL care;
- Examine religious literacy on an organisational level;

- Explore religious literacy from a service user perspective, in EOL care.

The project is a case study, and it will employ a mixed methods approach, using a survey (RLHC – Pentaris, 2019) and in-depth interviewing (RLHC – Pentaris, 2019) to examine religious literacy across the three areas identified in the objectives above. The sample will include approximately 1000 frontline staff members, 15 x interviews with senior management members of EOL care settings, and 15 x interviews with service users in EOL care. Research participants will be recruited via the Research Offices of the various EOL care settings, such as Hospices. The project is scheduled to be completed in the space of three years, inclusive of writing up.

In conclusion, the desired outcomes from this project refer to enhanced experience of service users in EOL care. The findings and recommendations from this project will lead to more sensitive and religiously literate practices, training opportunities, and introduce guidelines in this area and particularly spiritual care in EOL.

If you would like to discuss this opportunity and the PhD project before applying, please contact Dr. Panagiotis Pentaris (Associate Professor of Social Work and Thanatology) P.Pentaris@gre.ac.uk or Prof David Evans (Professor of Sexualities and Genders: Health and Well-Being) D.T.Evans@gre.ac.uk

Duration: 3 years Full-Time Study or 6 years Part-Time Study.

Funding: Self-Funded

Person Specification of Essential (E) or Desirable (D) requirements:	
Criteria:	E or D
Education and Training:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Class or 2nd class, First Division (Upper Second Class) Honours Degree or a taught Master's degree with a minimum average of 60% in all areas of assessment (UK or UK equivalent) in a relevant area to the proposed research project (e.g. Social Work; Social Care; Social Sciences; Health Sciences; Social Policy; Death Studies - Thanatology, Religious Studies) 	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For those whose first language is not English and/or if from a country where English is not the majority spoken language (as recognised by the UKBA), a language proficiency score of at least IELTS 6.5 (in all elements of the test) or an equivalent UK VISA and Immigration secure English Language Test is required, unless the degree above was taught in English and obtained in a majority English speaking country, e.g. UK, USA, Australia, New Zealand, etc, as recognised by the UKBA. 	E
Experience & Skills:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous experience of undertaking social care or health research (e.g. undergraduate or taught masters dissertation) 	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of methods used in social research 	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good writing skills 	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quantitative and qualitative skills 	E
Personal Attributes:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the fundamental differences between a taught degree and a research degree in terms of approach and personal discipline/motivation 	E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to, under guidance, complete independent work successfully 	E
Other Requirements:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PhD project research proposal that is related to the research area 	E

Closing date for applications: applications are accepted all year round

For further information contact: Dr Panagiotis Pentaris

E-mail: P.Pentaris@gre.ac.uk

Making an application:

Please read this information before making an application. Information on the application process is available at: <https://www.gre.ac.uk/research/study/apply/application-process>. Applications need to be made online via this link. **No other form of application will be considered.**

All applications **must include** the following information. Applications not containing these documents will not be considered.

- Reference Number (Ref)
- Personal statement outlining the motivation for a PhD and this particular project
- Research proposal (about 1500 words) related to the subject topic *
- A CV including 2 referees * (one ideally being from a dissertation supervisor)
- Academic qualification certificates/transcripts and IELTS/English Language certificate if you are an international applicant or if English is not your first language or you are from a country where English is not the majority spoken language as defined by the UK Border Agency *

**upload to the qualification section of the application form. Attachments must be a PDF format.*

Before submitting your application, you are encouraged to liaise with the Lead Supervisor on the details above.