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February 2003 Article of the Month

This month's article selection is by Ward A. Knights, Jr.,
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[Editor's Note: One of the authors of the featured article this month,
Annie George, was a CPE student of Ward Knights.]

Ironson, G., Solomon, G. F., Balbin, E. G., O'Cleirigh, C., George, A., Kumar, M., Larson, D. and Woods, T. E. [Department of Psychology and Psychiatry, University of Miami, gironson@aol.com]. **"The Ironson-Woods Spirituality/Religiousness Index is associated with long survival, health behaviors, less distress, and low cortisol in people with HIV/AIDS."** *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 24, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 34-48.

SUMMARY AND COMMENT: There was a three-fold purpose for this research: (1) the reliability and validity of the Ironson-Woods Spirituality/Religiousness Index was studied, (2) in relation to people living with HIV/AIDS, it looked at the relation between spirituality and religiousness, and (3) it looked at potential mediators in this regard. The authors note that prior literature in this field of religiousness/spirituality had been largely focused on healthy, community-dwelling populations whereas their study was centered on an AIDS population, finding that like the other groups studied, long survivors in the AIDS group also had a higher proportion of religious behaviors. In addition they identified the fact that benefits could also be derived from not only organized but also non-organized spiritual beliefs and behaviors. In the course of the study four factors on the Ironson-Woods SR Index were identified, Peace, Faith in God, Religious Behavior, and Compassionate View of Others. It was found that each of these scales was related significantly to long-term survival with AIDS. The study was funded by a National Institutes of Health Grant (R01) and by the National Institute for Healthcare Research [which has now become the International Center for the Integration of Health and Spirituality--see the note about the ICIHS web site in the "Web Finds" section of the Winter 2002 Research Network Newsletter]. The article is part of a special theme issue of the *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* that emerged out of a panel discussion on spirituality, religiousness and health at the annual meeting of the Society of Behavioral Medicine in March 2000.

This research is certainly an important addition to the current studies being done on spirituality/religion. For those who are not rather well schooled in research methodology and research language (like myself) this is certainly not an "easy read." However, I think it is good for us to stretch ourselves a bit now and then in relation to this type of research.

Suggestions for the Use of the Article for Discussion in CPE:

This research can be of value in the on-going discussions in CPE in relation to the issues surrounding the use of the terms spiritual and religious. One thing it gives, that sometimes is not found in other research of this nature, is a sound basis for honoring the religious behavior that is such a large part of organized religion, particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS. It is also an example of a very fine, top-level kind of research that we, in CPE, might hold up as a model to emulate. The article also includes 47 references with the names of articles and journals that many of us in CPE are not usually familiar with but that could be tremendous resources in broadening our understanding and knowledge.

Related Items of Interest:

Ironson, G., Solomon, G., Cruess, D., Barroso, J. and Stivers, M. "**Psychological factors related to long-term survival with HIV/AIDS.**" *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy* 2, no. 4 (December 1995): 249-266.

Koenig, H. G., McCullough, M. E. and Larson, D. B. ***Handbook of Religion and Health: A Century of Research Reviewed.*** New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Woods, T. E. and Ironson, G. H. "**Religion and spirituality in the face of illness: how cancer, cardiac, and HIV patients describe their spirituality/religiosity.**" *Journal of Health Psychology* 4, no. 3 (July 1999): 393-412.

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john.ehman@uphs.upenn.edu .
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