

European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health

Newsletter 2023-1

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Editorial

Dear colleagues, dear friends

Another busy year is came to its end and we are looking back on several highlights. The first one is our *European Conference in Amsterdam* opening the opportunity to gather again after two years of COVID and »isolation«. You will find more in-depth information in the newsletter.

A second highlight was our first *aef-workshop* on religious faith, psychotherapy and pastoral counseling in southern Germany and the third one is the *new handbook on religion, spirituality and health* edited by Prof. Harold Koenig coming out soon.

We are looking forward to meet you all latest on our European Conference in 2024 possibly in Salzburg.

René Hefti MD

Looking back 8th ECRSH-Conference in Amsterdam

Again the *European Conference on Religion, Spirituality and Health*, which was undertaken at *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* and organized by our *Research Institute for Spirituality and Health (RISH)* in close and cooperation with the *European Board* and the *Local Organizing Committee*, was a **successfull event with well-respected lectureres** from many nations, who discussed the conference's subject „*Religious, Spiritual and Existential Aspects in Mental Health Care*“ from interdisciplinary points of view.

As you may remember, our preceding newsletter contained a illustrating article by one of the keynote speakers, *Robert E. Emmons*, who is well known as one of the world leading experts in the research field of

Positive Psychology, with a main focus on gratitude. Of course our last newsletter is still available on our webiste, just as all previous newsletters, see URL below.

Related to ECRSH there is another **special service for you**: You are invited to take part in the conference without any fee and obligations just by joining the post-conference website, which contains abstracts, videos of the lectures in full length, and the PDF's of the presentations. A great ressource, please use it!

Free access to the ECRSH-lectures:
<https://ecrsh.eu/ecrsh-2022/programme/keynote-lectures-2>

Previous newsletters for download:
<https://figs.ch/de/netzwerk/newsletter>

Because it was possible to meet onsite again, after a period of abstinence caused by the pandemic, this was a *highly appreciated experience* among the participants. But also the online participation was welcomed, so that the *hybrid format* seems to be the clear trend for the future.



Note: lecture by Prof. David Rosmarin, Boston

Moral Injury Summary of Pof. Harold G. Koenig`s Keynote Lecture

Harold G. Koenig, professor of psychiatry and medicine at the Medical Center of Duke University in Durham, USA, spoke on the topic of „Moral Injury“ (MI). Koenig does research on MI for serveral years, mirrored by a number of scientific articles.

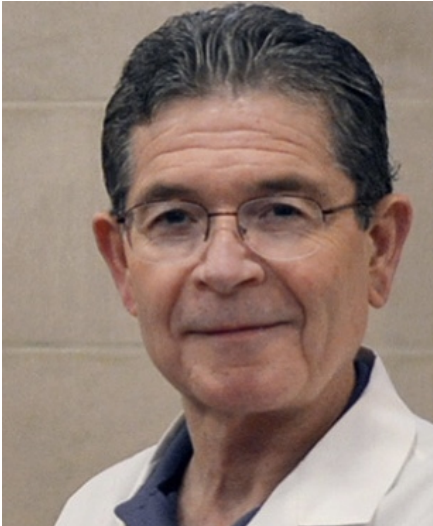
Scientific research on MI started after the **Vietnam war** and was initially focussed on veterans, who became victims, perpetrators or witnesses of *events injuring their moral sentiment in an extreme manner*. Here we already have a quite precise definition of MI, including the difference to *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*. Moral aspects do not belong to the main symptoms of PTSD. Nevertheless the areas of PTSD and MI have much in common, because both problems result from traumatic experiences.

Empirical research on MI is new, whereas the experience itself is as old as mankind. Veterans of war are struck by MI to a very high degree. Meanwhile lots off studies have been published about the matter and a number of questionnaires in order to diagnose MI exist.

For the **treatment of MI** Koenig recommends the following methods: Psychological practices from conventional *Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CPT)* and *Mindfulness Based Therapy*, for example *Adaptive Disclosure Training*, spiritually centered aids as *Building Spiritual Strength* and *Spiritual-Integrated Cognitive Processing Therapy (SICPT)*, complemented by interdisciplinary cooperation with theological experts as chaplains, who represent the individual confession of the affected person.

SICPT therapy contains 12 sessions. The basic model can be adapted according to the individual religious background. Patients shall become aware of their **own spiritual resources** and learn an empathic encounter with their inner conflicts instead of blaming themselves. They shall *deal with the meaning of guilt and forgiveness* and succeed in helpful new appraisals. In order to internalize these they shall cultivate a closer connection to their religious community, if possible, and deepen their personal spiritual life.

This schedule is complemented by a pastoral care program, which also contains 12 sessions. It should be guided by a spiritually competent person and can be considered to be a matter of pastoral counselling.



Professor Harold G. Koenig

The medical concept of MI originally stems from traumatic experiences in war. But meanwhile MI has become a relevant factor in health services. This is emphatically addressed by Koenig, which can easily be seen by taking a look at his lecture's headline: „Moral Injury in Mental Health Care - what can we learn from the Veterans Studies?“

Further investigating MI and the effectiveness of therapies is an urgent task for further research.

You have free access to the video as well as to the PDF with the slides of his presentation. You just have to visit the ECRSH-Website:

<https://ecrsh.eu/ecrsh-2022>

H.A. Willberg

An encouraging start First aef-Workshop on religious faith, psychotherapy and pastoral counseling

During springtime the „Arbeitskreis für Empirische Forschung zu Glaube, Psychotherapie und Seelsorge“ (aef) gathered to further constitute itself. In October 14-15 the first aef-Workshop was held at the *Internationale Hochschule Liebenzell* (IHL) near Stuttgart in the northern area of Black Forest. First part of the event was a **Pre-Workshop by Professor Stefan Huber**, head of the *Institute for Empirical Research on Religion* at Bern University, Switzerland, concerning qualitative case studies with the purpose of reconstructing individual faith dimensions.

The second day was filled with scientific **presentations of ongoing academic research projects** on matters of religious faith, psychotherapy and pastoral counseling, mainly master- and doctoral theses. Much time was taken for discussions, led and contributed by the participating academic experts, among others *Prof. Ulrich Giesekeus* of IHL, *Prof. Henning Freund* of *Ev. Hochschule Tabor* in Marburg, Germany, *Dr. Sonja Friedrich-Killinger*, psychotherapist and researcher, Stuttgart, Germany, and *René Hefti MD*, senior lecturer at the University of Basel and head of the *Research Institute of Spirituality and Health*, Langenthal, Switzerland, which is one of the cooperating partners of the aef working group.

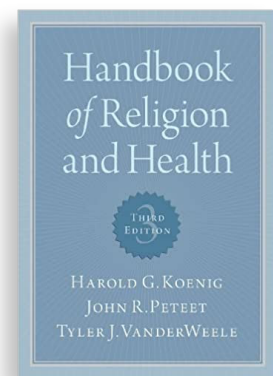


Note: aef-workshop in Bad Liebenzell Germany

The organizers are looking forward to the next event, which will be a **two-day conference on Grace and Forgiveness in psychotherapy** and pastoral counseling in October 20-21, 2023, see www.aef-gps.de.

The scientific benchmark Handbook of Religion&Health 3rd Edition in 2023

The new *Handbook of Religion and Health* of Harold Koenig, and his co-authors Tyler VanderWeele and John Peteet will set a scientific benchmark in the **body of knowledge in empirical research on religion & health**. Its published again by Oxford University Press: New York.



For further informations see

<https://www.amazon.com/Handbook-Religion-Health-John-Peteet/dp/0190088850/>

Save the date!

The next ECRSH Conference will take place in **May 2024**, probably in Salzburg (A), on the topic of:

Spiritual Care Interventions

Besides there will be a **Research Workshop** again.

Imprint

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