

It's perhaps a banal truism to say that the world of healthcare has changed enormously in the past two decades. But it is nonetheless the case that the work that many of us thought was another aspect of 'ministry' has become professionalised. Chaplaincy is now one more profession among so many within healthcare and as such it carries the same level of accountability our colleagues expect of any other professional role.

In a professional world committed to evidence-based practice, this means that chaplains are being challenged not only to be skilled, pastoral practitioners, we need to be able to demonstrate that our practices are appropriate to patient needs, that they are effective and that they represent good value for money.

This means that chaplains cannot avoid engaging with research.

It is, of course, one thing to know that research is important for our profession; it's quite another thing to have the skills needed to engage with research.

chaplains cannot avoid engaging with research


Most chaplains were trained in theology and pastoral skills. Few of us received training in empirical research. So being told that we are now expected to be able to engage with this kind of research can feel like a burden that we're ill-equipped to carry.

There are two things to say about this.

- First, there are many ways for chaplains to engage with research. As far back as *Caring for the Spirit* (SYWDF 2003) it was noted that not all chaplains will be *research active*. In fact, very few are likely to engage in frontline research, either as part of a research team or as a lead researcher. For most of us, it's enough for us to become *research aware/research literate*. [Fitchett and Grosseohme \(2012\)](#) have a very good article on how chaplains can develop research literacy.

- Second, there are lots of easily accessible resources that can help to increase our research literacy to the levels we need to read and understand empirical research.

Which brings us to the purpose of the **Digest**, which is to highlight the kinds of useful websites, books, articles and courses that will help increase our confidence to engage with research, become research aware and provide a place for researchers to network.

Research activity may not be for all chaplains, but all chaplains do need to be research literate. 

Welcome

... to this Introductory Edition of *UK Chaplains' Research Digest*, which aims to be a quarterly resource sheet to encourage and support chaplains to be research aware and research informed.

Each quarter the **Digest** will bring together news about research by chaplains and others active in chaplaincy/spiritual care research.

It will suggest research articles for discussion in chaplains' journal clubs.

It will also highlight books, articles, relevant training and webinars.

If you're involved in or are aware of research that would interest chaplain colleagues, please get in touch with the editors. We will do what we can to share the news.

Steve Nolan
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By way of introduction

Here is a brief introduction to two important resources for chaplain research.



The **European Research Institute for Chaplaincy in Healthcare** was founded in 2017 to promote research by chaplains into chaplaincy practice.

ERICH's goals include:

- initiate research to inform the best possible spiritual care by healthcare chaplains;
- promote the importance of research in spiritual care by healthcare chaplains;
- offer education, resources and mentorship for healthcare chaplains interested in spiritual care research.

www.pastoralezorg.be/page/erich/



Transforming Chaplaincy is a 'think tank' specifically tasked with promoting chaplaincy research literacy—not for its own sake, but with the goal of improving patients' outcomes.

Its web-pages are a store of resources for experienced chaplaincy researchers and those coming to chaplaincy research for the first time.

www.transformchaplaincy.org/

Entering the Process

For anyone wanting guidance about getting started in research, The e-book *An Invitation to Chaplaincy Research: Entering the Process* ([Myers & Roberts, 2014](#)) is the place to begin.

Coming from colleagues across the Atlantic—who are largely ahead of the game in terms of research—this freely downloadable e-book is the multidisciplinary product of researchers and authors working in chaplaincy, medicine, nursing, psychology and sociology.

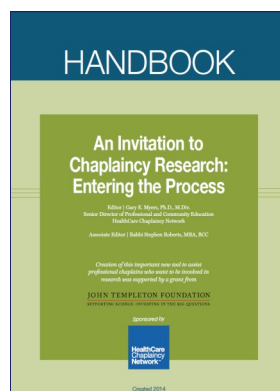
The e-book's primary aim is to build research literacy, but it also takes you by the hand to guide you through the whole process of conducting a research project. From the basics of describing **what chaplain research is** and how it is done, to perhaps what is the hardest task, **identifying the research question**, to selecting the most **appropriate methodology**, to **disseminating findings**, readers will gain an overview of the process *from the chaplain's perspective*.

And here is the unique feature of this e-book.

Besides learning the basics of how to read statistics and evaluate qualitative and quantitative research, the chaplain writers share accounts of their personal journeys into the world of research.

Click on the link to download

www.healthcarechaplaincy.org/docs/publications/templeton_research/hcc_research_handbook_final.pdf



I wish there had been a resource such as this available when I began my exploratory journey into healthcare chaplaincy research over 15 years ago -
Ewan Kelly

Journal Club

Meeting monthly to read and discuss a research paper is a good way for a chaplaincy team to build research literacy.

Good research papers are easily accessible and *Health and Social Care Chaplaincy* is the obvious place to start. The journal features papers detailing relevant empirical research.

Another readily available source is [Fitchett, White & Lyndes \(2018\)](#) collection (to be reviewed in the next edition of the *Digest*).

Less well-known may be the long-running series 'Articles of the Month', published by John Ehman. Available on the website of the [ACPE Research Network](#), each month Ehman summarises a research paper, and gives comments and suggestions for discussion.

A journal club needn't be a long meeting; it could be part of a team's regular gathering. Select and agree to read a paper prior to the meeting. Circulate it in good time and take 15-20 minutes to discuss the findings and their implications for practice. If there is time, you might take things further by considering the quality of the research.

Consider the assumptions the researchers make and the methodology they have chosen. The point is to get the team discussing research that will benefit patients.

Want more! UK Chaplains' Research Digest will be sent to all CHCC members to help develop

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research literacy and awareness. To be part of more regular research conversations, email the address below.

Non-CHCC members can also request the **Digest** using the same address: research@healthcarechaplains.org

References

- Fitchett, G. and Grosseohme, D. (2012). Health care chaplaincy as a research-informed profession. In: S.R. (Ed.). *Professional Spiritual and Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook* (pp. 387-406). Woodstock, VY: SkyLight Paths Publishing.
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