



Professional Chaplaincy

**What Is Happening to It
During Health Care Reform?**

Larry VandeCreek, DMin
Editor

Professional Chaplaincy: What Is Happening to It During Health Care Reform?

Professional Chaplaincy: What Is Happening to It During Health Care Reform? has been co-published simultaneously as *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*, Volume 10, Number 1 2000.



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Preface

In an article titled “Remembering the Real Questions,” J. J. Cohen (1998) wrote that patients primarily ask physicians three central questions: “What is happening to me?” “What’s going to happen to me?” and “What can be done to improve what happens to me?” It appears that health care professionals are asking those questions of themselves as reform efforts roll over them. These professions are changing forever. Fox (1998), in fact, suggests that this is the third reorganization of health care, the first beginning in the 1880s as physicians began to use “laboratory science as the basis of useful knowledge about the causes, natural history, and treatment of disease” (p. 314). The second began during the Second World War and continued until recently during which health policy gave priority to supplying as many physicians, particularly specialists, as possible. The third is the reforming process as we know it today.

Professional chaplains are asking these questions too. What is happening to us? What’s going to happen to us? What can be done to improve what happens to us? Health care reform is having its own impact on the profession. Increased scrutiny is everywhere and more productivity is expected of everyone. Some departments are losing professional and support positions as well as other resources. The pastoral care profession as we have known it during this century is changing forever.

The professional chaplaincy profession is vulnerable in unique ways when compared to the rest of health care, however. These vulnerabilities have existed for decades, but the reform efforts make them particularly evident and painful. For example, professional chaplaincy

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