

INVITED EDITORIAL

PAIN MANAGEMENT

What the religious books say about pain and pain management?

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Pain is a feeling, that every human experienced at some time in his or her life. The religions have explored its meaning and purpose for centuries. While many faiths consider pain as a test of faith, or a way to grow spiritually, they also emphasize compassion, healing, and ethical approaches to relieving the suffering.

Over a period of time, our understanding of pain has evolved. Aristotle once described pain as the opposite of pleasure. In the Middle Ages, many believed that the pain was a form of divine punishment; a view that persists in some religious traditions even today.¹ Different religions offer varied interpretations of suffering. Buddhism sees it as an inherent part of life, Islam considers it as a test from God, and Hinduism links it to karma and past actions.

The 1960s marked a shift towards integrating spirituality into healthcare, recognizing that pain management should encompass the body, as well as the mind and the spirit.²

Today, modern medicine embraces holistic approaches, incorporating meditation, hypnosis, prayer, and other alternative methods into pain relief strategies. These approaches align with many religious teachings that encourage faith and medical treatment to cope with suffering.

In this editorial, we explore how the three most common religions in the world—Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism—address pain and pain management, highlighting the valuable lessons and wisdom they offer.

Christianity:

Christianity perceives suffering as a natural part of life and frequently links it to spiritual trials and the fall of

man. Job's suffering greatly while holding fast to his faith demonstrates how the Bible acknowledges emotional and physical suffering. The idea that suffering can have a deeper, spiritual purpose is reinforced by the portrayal of Jesus Christ's crucifixion as the ultimate act of suffering for humanity's redemption. Suffering, according to many Christians, is a test of one's faith, a way to become spiritually purer, or a way to get closer to God.³ Christianity does, however, also place a strong emphasis on healing and compassion, as evidenced by healing miracles by Jesus.

The significance of easing the suffering is demonstrated by Jesus curing the sick in Matthew 9:35. In order to care for the ill and suffering; this has impacted Christian customs, resulting in the founding of hospitals, hospice care, and charitable medical services.⁴

Christianity strongly promotes pain alleviation, especially in the context of contemporary medical ethics, even if it acknowledges suffering as a spiritual experience. The focus on healing aligns with the developments in anesthesia, essential for managing pain because it guarantees patients' comfort and dignity throughout medical procedures. Christian medical ethics emphasize the sanctity of life while recognizing the importance of pain management, making anesthesia and palliative care essential components of compassionate healthcare.⁵ Anesthesia professionals play a key role in this holistic approach, addressing acute and chronic pain and navigating ethical concerns in the end-of-life care. Balancing pain relief with maintaining consciousness and dignity is critical to their work. Contemporary Christian perspectives on anesthesia and pain management highlight the alignment between relieving suffering

and the principles of compassion and care, advocating for a thoughtful integration of faith, prayer, and medical expertise.⁶

Hinduism:

In Hinduism, pain is often viewed as a teacher, offering valuable insights about life and existence. The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes that suffering is a natural part of the human experience and can lead to spiritual growth and enlightenment.⁵

According to the text, people should act with dharma (righteousness) and remain composed when suffering. The idea of karma encourages a thoughtful approach to pain by implying that suffering can be the consequence of past deeds.⁷

Hinduism emphasizes medical intervention and compassion. With origins in Hindu philosophy, the Ayurveda system strongly emphasizes using yoga, meditation, and herbal medicine to manage pain holistically. As long as it is by dharma (moral duty) and does not unduly speed up death, Hindu principles generally allow pain alleviation.⁸

Islam:

According to Islam, going through hardships is a sign from Allah, and a way to become more spiritually pure. The Holy Quran says, "And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient" (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:155). In Islamic beliefs, patience (saber) is a highly valued virtue.⁹

Additionally, Islam promotes the pursuit of medical care and healing. Sunan Abu Dawood said the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reportedly stated, "Use medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it". This emphasizes the Islamic view that treating pain, including medicine and counseling, is acceptable and even recommended as a way to preserve health.¹⁰

The Quran also serves as a reminder to believers that Allah is the ultimate source of true healing. When Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) stated, "And when I am ill, it is He who heals me" (wa izza mariztu fa huwa yashfeen) (Surah Ash-Shu'ara 26:80), he eloquently conveyed this dependence on divine care. This verse emphasizes that healing is determined by Allah's will and kindness, even though medical efforts are crucial.¹⁰ It encourages a holistic strategy that has confidence in both modern therapies and Allah as the ultimate source of healing.

CONCLUSION

Across many religious traditions, there are common themes regarding the management of pain. It is accepted that suffering is a normal occurrence that can

lead to personal growth, spiritual development, and stronger bonds with the divine and humanity.¹¹ Although there are many different approaches to understanding and dealing with pain, the emphasis on compassion, mindfulness, and resilience is a common thread that gives people guidance through their suffering.

In our contemporary environment, when suffering can often feel alone, these religious teachings serve as a reminder of the importance of introspection, group support, and the potential for personal development. People can find hope and healing in their journey through grief by applying the wisdom of these traditions.¹²

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Authors contribution

All of the authors took part in the search of literature and drafting this manuscript.

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