

## **Abstract**

In Czech hospitals, a patient's problems are usually perceived mainly as troubles of a somatic nature, which reduces the quality of the care provided. It is usually very professional in terms of fulfilling the patient's physical needs. However, the care provided in the domain of the patient's psycho-social needs is developing rather slowly, while caring for their spiritual needs is either totally absent or only beginning to be realized and offered.

This thesis looks into the ways in which the spiritual needs, above all the need to find a meaning in one's life, can be examined, understood, and fulfilled – especially in people that are seriously, incurably or terminally ill. The hospital staff do not have enough experience concerning the care of the spiritual dimension of man, nor do they have enough knowledge and skills to provide the necessary care and assistance, although such needs could often be crucial for the quality of life of such patients.

V. E. Frankl's anthropology, which is the basis of his therapeutic approach of logotherapy and existential analysis, is applied here as one of the theoretical models that are suitable for the clinical application of this thesis. This approach concentrates on the fulfillment and/or the frustration of the human quest for meaning during common as well as extreme life situations. Particularly, it elaborates on the issue of the loss or recovery of the spiritual meaning in situations of human suffering, including one's confrontation with illness and dying.

The theoretical elaboration of topics such as the search for meaning, the stressful impact of experiencing existential frustration and/or the recovery of meaning in life, their consequences for the thinking and feeling of the ill person and on the functioning of his/her immune regulations is a starting point to establish the needs and possibilities to take care of that aspect of his/her humanity.

It is worked through in the historical context as well in the context of the currently developing institutional spiritual support of patients in the framework of health care both abroad and in the Czech Republic. The conclusions are presented in the form of ethical guidelines as well as practical provisions in training the hospital staff and in providing thus targeted care. The theoretical analyses are supplemented with several case examples to illustrate the general conclusions.

The aim of this thesis is to provide a comprehensive picture of the needs and possibilities in providing high-quality professional care of the ill in terms of spiritual support, and to help change the perception of the spiritual needs of patients in the context of a holistic approach to them. It may also provide an impulse to change the approach to patients in health care institutions towards a deeper understanding of all their needs and personal contexts, corresponding to the concept of the quality of life as defined by the WHO in terms of the bio-psycho-social-spiritual model of man.