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GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS INTERACTING WITH PATIENTS OF THE JAIN RELIGION AND THEIR FAMILIES

BACKGROUND & INTRODUCTION

Jainism is one of the oldest living religions. The term Jain means the follower of the Jinas (Spiritual Victors), human teachers who attained omniscience (infinite awareness, understanding and insight). The teachers or prophets are also called **Thirthankaras** (discoverers of the Path) or those who help others escape the cycle of birth and death. It is believed there have been 24 **Thirthankars** in the present cosmic cycle beginning with the first, Lord Adinatha Rishabha Deva and 24th being Lord Mahavir (599 B.C.E.- 527 B.C.E). Although all Jains have the same beliefs in principle they are represented by the norms of practice. There are the image worshipping (**deravasi** or **murtipujaka**) Jains of **Svetambar** division of Jainism. Which are different from the devotions of the **sthanakvasis**, who worship without images. In the **Digambar** sect the bases of rituals are the about considerable detailed differences. But in essence the Jain rituals are the frameworks for personal devotions of individuals. Religious books are called **Agams**.

Currently, there are approximately 10 million Jains in India, 100,000 in the United States and 7,000 in Metropolitan Chicago¹. Many Jains are from India originally although now there are Jains in Europe, America, the Far East, and Africa. The moral fabric of Jainism is based on nonviolence. Jainism considers nonviolence to be the most important virtue for an individual as well as society. Jains believe that, on a global scale, no good of an individual or society can be achieved through violence. In general, vices of falsehood, stealing, unchastity and possessiveness entail physical and mental violence of self and others. Thus the five vows essentially enable us to practice nonviolence. The vow of nonviolence is the first and foremost virtue.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Jainism believes in the peaceful co-existence of all living beings and teaches reverence to and respect for all life and that all life has a unique place in the universe and has the right to exist. Since Jainism is not only a religion but also a way of life the basic tenants of Jainism, include nonviolence, truthfulness, not stealing, chastity and non-materialism. The fundamental belief of Jains is **ahimsa**, non-violence that extends to all forms of life. In essence, the principal of non-violence translates into action as to live and let live and help others live. Jain philosophy emphasizes that animals and plants have souls, even the elements of earth, air, fire, and water are made of tiny souls. According to Jainism, there is no personal God, assumed by most

¹ National Conference for Community and Justice, 2001

religions, nor a single impersonal absolute reality. Jainism does not believe in a creator -God, that controls the destinies of humans. According to Jainism, God is the soul that has acquired All-Truth, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss, and is Free of all Attachment or Aversion, and is Omniscient and Omnipotent. The whole world of experience can be explained by the principle of **Karma** without the intervention of a divine force. Pleasure or pain are of man's own making, God has no part in it. Human kind is not dependent on any external force. It regards each living being as an independent **jiva** (or soul). Moreover, each **jiva** is responsible, for what it experiences in terms of pain and pleasure, hell or heaven, and ultimate bliss. Jainism believes in the sanctity of life in whatever form it might be. Different kinds of creatures were embodiments of similar souls in varying similar situations, therefore the emphasis on showing equal regard for all forms of life. The ultimate end, and purpose of all life and activity is to realize the free and blissful state of ones' true being. The practice and belief in Jain philosophy will result in removing all bondages (**karmas**) in the process of purifying of the soul.

CULTURE AND CELEBRATIONS

There are two categories of festivals or celebrations that Jains follow; eternal and non-eternal. The non-eternal festivals are further divided into those that relate to people and those that relate to historical events. **Mahavir Jayanti** or the birthday celebration of Mahavir is a people related festival and so is the **Mahavir Nirvana** or the day **Mahavir** attained liberation also commonly know as **Diwali**. On the other hand **Samavastsari** is an eternal festival relating neither to people nor to an event. It is time to celebrate the natural qualities of the soul. It is celebrated once a year around August/September and lasts for eight-day period known as **Paryushan-Parva**. **Paryushan** the sacred Jain Festival of Forget and Forgive - celebrated annually for eight days culminating in **Samavastsari** as day of Universal Friendship and Inner Purification.

During the eight days of **Paryushan**, Jains practice penances, recommit to the vows of nonviolence, refrain from food intake by fasting for extended periods of time and study the scriptures. These activities are to minimize violence and meant to spend time in meditation re-examining one's actions over the year. Jains go through confessions and admissions of any wrong doings, pleading for forgiveness to both family and friends and extending forgiveness to all living beings. For all eight days much of the time is spent in practicing different forms of meditation, chanting, and reading religious books and scriptures. Those who do not fast refrain from eating green vegetables and eat very simple food that is made with minimized violence. During this period the focus of practice is on Forgiveness, Modesty or Humility, straight forwardness, Contentment Truth, Self restraint from injury to life, from desires and passions, penance, Renunciation, Non-attachment, celibacy.

Deepawali or **Diwali** is the most important festival in India regardless of religion. For the Jains, it is the second most after the **Paryushan Parva**. For Jains, **Diwali** marks the anniversary of **Mahavir's moksha** (liberation). **Mahavir** attained **moksha** on this day in 527 B.C. (and also of the achievement of total knowledge, omniscience, by his chief follower, **Gautama Indrabhuti**). The festival falls on the last day of the month of **Ashvina**, the end of the year as per Indian calendar (in October or November). The celebration starts in the early morning of the previous day, for it was then that **Mahavir** commenced his last sermon, which lasted till late in the night of **Diwali**. It is narrated that the eighteen kings of northern India who were in his audience decided that the light of their master's knowledge would be kept alive symbolically by lighting of the lamps. Hence, it is called **Deepawali**, (dipa means lamp), or **Diwali**.

The New Year begins the next day and is the occasion for joyful gatherings of Jains, with everybody wishing each other a Happy New Year. The fifth day of the New Year is known as ***Jnana Panchami***, the day of knowledge, when the scriptures, which impart knowledge to the people, are worshipped with devotion.

BELIEFS RELATED TO HEALTH CARE

Jains believe that:

- Birth and death are natural phenomena for a human being.
- The ultimate end and purpose of all life and activity is to realize the free and blissful state of ones true being. Living a Jain life means it should result in removing all bondages (***karmas***) in the process of purifying of the soul.
- Human life is of the highest form.
- Abortion is forbidden. In principle, even at the expense of the mother's own life, it should be avoided but one may decide to practice it in such extraneous situation with repentance.
- Autopsy is allowed.
- Jains are vegetarians and may have concerns and resistance about treatments involving animal derived food and medications, however individuals may make personal choices.
- Blood transfusions and organ transplantation are by personal choice.
- Jains do not favor contraception.
- Assisted suicide and euthanasia are not permitted or encouraged.
- Decisions on the withdrawal of life support will be made by personal choice with the advice of a spiritual leader.

GENERAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES (INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES MAY VARY)

Practicing Jainism means undertaking religious practices involving various self-imposed restraints while adhering to the commitment to non-violence. Depending on the practice of the patient, a room may be required where there would be no animal products such as leather, silk, fur etc.).

MEDICAL & NURSING CARE

- The principles used by Jains are that of nonviolence which includes preservation of life, sanctity of life, alleviation of suffering, which extends to respect of the patient's autonomy, while achieving best medical care with out or with minimum harm; and always being honest and truthful in giving information.

- In general, Jains do not have a preference that the health care personnel rendering care be of the same sex. However, there may be orthodox practitioners who may request same-sex caregivers.
- It is Jain culture to visit the sick. Be open and understanding of the visits by family members and well wishers when practical.
- For patients where domestic violence is an issue, Apna Ghar 773/334-0173 can serve as a resource in Metropolitan Chicago - they provide shelter and counseling for Indian Asian victims.

SPIRITUAL CARE/PRAYERS

The daily rituals may be done as a solitary worshipper performing his or her devotions at a temple or before the image of the ***Tirthankaras***. Some rituals may be performed in small groups or in congregations. Congregational worship often takes the form of singing hymns in vernacular, interspersed often by the chanting of ***Prakrit*** (ancient Indian language like Sanskrit) prayers. These celebrations may include devotional singing and dancing, celebrating events in the life of a ***Tirthankaras***, and end with ***aarti*** ritual with lights and lamps.

Another daily and more personal ritual is a form of meditations is ***Samayika***² and ***Pratikraman***³. ***Samayika*** is an exercise in attaining equanimity, in which the individual engages with the true self through increasing detachment from all external objects and passions. The detachment engages in temporary renunciation of all possessions before sitting in meditation. The ritual includes forgiving and begging forgiveness of the entire world of living beings. ***Samayika*** may also be performed while studying a religious text, repeating a sacred phrases (mantra) or hymns, or listening to a sermon.

Jainism advocates six essential rites for common people) to help them free themselves from negative thoughts and enhance their spiritual progress. It recommends these rites be performed daily:

1. ***Samayik*** - Equanimity : Remaining calm and undisturbed for 48 minutes
2. ***Chaturvimshati-stav*** : Praying and appreciating the qualities of the twenty four *Tirthankars*

² **Meaning of *Samayik Rituals (Equanimity)*:**

During the *Samayik* one should reflect on the following qualities:

- Equanimity towards all beings
- Self-control and pure aspirations
- Abandonment of every thought which is tainted by desire and aversion.

Equanimity is the quality of remaining calm and undisturbed. It implies evenness of mind and temper. It is serenity and composure. It is essential for the practice of nonviolence and removal of *Karmas*. Monks and nuns practice equanimity at all times. Common people can gradually detach themselves from all external objects.

³ **Meaning of *Pratikraman Ritual*:**

As explained above "*Prati*" means "back" and "*kraman*" means "to go", i.e. to go back, review, confess, and repent the bad thoughts and deeds from our daily activities. It also means going back to the path of nonviolence, truthfulness, non-attachment, forgiving the faults of others, asking forgiveness with an open heart, and extending friendship. This will stop (*samvara*) the influx (*asrava*) of *karma* that cover the true nature of our soul (self, jiva, or atman) which has the qualities of perfect knowledge, vision, bliss, and power. Throughout the *Pratikraman* ritual, if you think about material happiness, family, friends, and relationships then you should remember that this is not the true nature of my soul, let me meditate on the mantra called.

3. **Vandana** : Respecting and saluting ascetics
4. **Pratikraman** : Reviewing your daily activities, and concentrating on retreating from them
5. **Kayotsarg** : Stopping attachments to the body, and turning within yourself
6. **Pratyakhan/Pachchhakhan** : Renouncing certain activities for some time to discipline one's self

The preparation for the **Samayik** and **Pratikraman** Ritual include:

- The wearing of clean clothes
- Sitting on a cotton piece of cloth on a hard floor
- Keep a clean handkerchief in the front of one's mouth during the recitation of rituals or keeping one's mouth covered all the time
- Refraining from eating, drinking, and chewing
- Avoid using the restroom during ritual
- Keep silent when prayers are not recited by you

Visits by members of the clergy from other faiths are welcomed.

(See Appendix for a Jain Prayer)

DIET/FOOD PREFERENCE & PRACTICES

The basic foundation of the science of Jain food is non-violence. Jains can eat only food, which is fully non-injurious. If living is not possible by taking fully non-injurious food, Jains consume food which involves least possible injury. The question of killing five-sensed beings (**Panchendriya**) for food is not allowed at all and destruction to lesser or even one-sensed beings (**Ekandriya**) avoided as far as possible. Jains conduct of food includes being strict vegetarians; this means no meat, beef, fish, chicken, poultry, and eggs or their by-products. Many devout or orthodox Jains may not eat underground vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions, garlic and the like. Jains observe further restriction on foods said to support large amounts of microscopic life such as figs, honey, and alcohol and root vegetables. Some will not eat multi-seeded fruits and vegetables such as eggplant, guava, cauliflower and broccoli, which are often found to contain worms. Some Jains may be vegans and not even consume milk and milk products.

Some orthodox Jain fasts twice and sometimes three times a fortnight on specified days of the lunar calendar. During some fasts only grains are consumed and no green vegetables or fruits are eaten. Since Jains practice non-violence of thought as much as of action, candies and chocolates shaped as animals or humans are generally not consumed in Jain families. Many Jains will take meals only after sunrise and before sunset. Many avoid cooked food left overnight.

Consultation with the patient and family is important regarding dietary restrictions, including tube feedings.

END OF LIFE CARE

Jainism understands the process of dying as that of changing clothes. Jains believe in reincarnation and transmigration (movement from one life to another) of soul.

When someone is dying, Jain leaders, relatives, family members visit the dying to give the family solace and support. Monks and nuns if present in the vicinity, may come to see the dying

person. They will sing hymns particularly the **Namokar mantra-a** hymn for surrendering to the liberated souls. They also explain the temporary nature for the physical body and all worldly attachments. They will encourage the dying person to have noble thoughts, ask to think about forgiveness for anything they have done that was not life enriching during their life and to forgive all beings who have done wrong to them, and have a peaceful death.

Scriptures like **Kalpasutra**, **Samayasar** and **Uttaradhyan** sutra are read for comfort and consolation. Some Jains may choose to do a **santharo**, which is renunciation (giving up of all material possessions and attachments to people) and total acceptance of death for spiritual upliftment, where all life supports are removed including food and water. This is a voluntary practice one may choose when at the end stage. Prayers and devotional songs are chanted. Audio-video cassettes may be used to accompany religious practices. The **santharo** is generally done away from the hospital. It is a personal choice done with the advice of a spiritual leader.

After death, the family members participate in the process of preparing the body by washing and dressing the body in new clothes. Prayers are continuously chanted. A lit lamp burning with clarified butter may be kept in the room with a dead body. Different Jains may or may not use flowers during this time. After death the body is cremated, and the whole community may come to the cremation.

RESOURCES/REFERENCES:

The Jain Society of Metropolitan Chicago

P.O. Box 8326
435 N. Rt. 59,
Bartlett, IL 60103
Phone: (630) 837-1088
Fax (630) 837-1099

Jain Study Group

www.jainstudy.org

Vegetarian diet resources

www.vegsource.com

Jain Study Circle

99-1160 Avenue 3D
Flushing, New York 11368-4436
Phone: 201/ 967-9344; 718/ 699-4653

Federation of Jaina

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Film

THE FRONTIERS OF PEACE: JAINISM IN INDIA **(A Feature Film)**

The film explores Jainism by showing the interrelationship between all four elements of the "Sangh" or community of monks, nuns, laymen. Set in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, the film first establishes the central religious tenets of the religion, impure actions prevent the soul from achieving Liberation and Liberation can only be achieved by practicing *ahimsa* (non-violence). The implications of these assumptions for each element of the Jain community are also explored. (40 minutes, 1986).

The Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council wishes to acknowledge the technical assistance of Hema Pokharna, Ph.D, Mandakini Pokharna, MD and the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions in the preparation of this document.

Approved by the Committee on Clinical, Administrative, Professional & Emergency Services – 04/12/02
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Jain Prayer

Namaskar/Namokar Maha-mantra

Namo Arihantanam
Namo Siddhanam
Namo Airiyanam
Namo Uvajjhayanam
Namo Loe Savva Sahunam

Eso Panch Namokaro
Savva Pava Panasano
Mangala Nancha Savvesim
Padhamam Havai Mangalam

Namo Arihantanam

I bow to those living beings who have reached enlightenment by overcoming inner weaknesses, who have attained infinite knowledge, vision, bliss, and power and showed us the path which brings an end to the cycle of birth and death.

Namo Siddhanam

I bow to those who have attained the state of perfection and immortality by liberating themselves of all karma.

Namo Airiyanam

I bow to those living beings who practice before preaching right knowledge, right perception, and right conduct.

Namo Uvajjhayanam

I bow to those living beings who understand the true nature of the soul and teach the importance of the spiritual life over the material life.

Namo Loe Savva Sahunam

I bow to all the living beings who strictly follow the five great vows of conduct and inspire us to live a simple life.

Eso Panch Namokaro

To these five types of great souls I offer my praise.

Savva Pava Panasano

Such praise will help diminish my negative vibrations and sins.

Mangala Nancha Savvesim

Giving this praise is most auspicious.

Padhamam Havai Mangalam

It is so auspicious as to bring happiness.

Chattari Mangalam:

Chattari Mangalam,

Arihanta Mangalam,
Siddha Mangalam,
Sahu Mangalam,
Kevali Pannato Dhammo Mangalam.
Chattari Loguttama,
Arihanta Loguttama,
Siddha Loguttama,
Sahu Loguttama,
Kevali Pannato Dhammo Loguttamo.
Chattari Saranam Pavvajjami,
Arihanta Saranam Pavvajjami,
Siddha Saranam Pavvajjami,
Sahu Saranam Pavvajjami,
Kevali Pannatum Dhammun Saranam Pavvajjami.

These four are auspicious; the arihantas, the siddhas, the ascetics, and the religion expounded by the omniscient beings (Tirthankars).

These four are the most divine in the universe; the arihantas, the siddhas, the ascetics, and the religion expounded by the omniscient beings (Tirthankars).

May I take refuge in these four; the arihantas, the siddhas, the ascetics, and the religion expounded by the omniscient beings (Tirthankars).