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## Navigating religion and spirituality in medical situations

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*J*ust as the body and mind need attention and treatment, so does the spiritual aspect of a person. But when it comes to providing medical care, the moral guidance offered by religion can run counter to what physicians are taught about providing the highest standard of medicine.

Each religion provides a different ethical and moral compass, and, as such, doctors may encounter situations throughout their careers when the course of medical care that makes the most sense to them goes against a patient's spiritual beliefs. Medical conditions affect people regardless of religion, so there may be times when the best course of

medical care would dictate that a Jehovah's Witness receive a blood transfusion or a Muslim take a medication that contains pig byproducts. Nonetheless, these patients may choose to refuse treatment because it runs counter to their spiritual beliefs, regardless of what makes sense medically.

New physicians are wise to enter the medical profession knowing they are likely to encounter situations where religious choices can conflict with best treatment practices, but understanding how to approach and address these situations before they happen can make it easier for both the doctor and patient to navigate these potentially differing views on religion and medicine.



