

## Religions, Culture and Healthcare

Author: Susan Hollins  
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The foreword to this useful and notably readable book for all healthcare workers reminds us that in the UK we now have more diverse faith communities than any other country in the European Union.

The reality of working in varied healthcare settings, while seeking to provide high quality care and treatment for patients and their families in the NHS and private care sector, is an immense challenge.

Rev. Susan Hollins has for several years been working within the NHS acute sector of care. More recently she has been appointed as one of the four Lead Chaplains to take forward the modernisation agenda for spiritual health

care. Clearly her experience and qualifications make her eminently suitable for authoring this book.

Her over-riding premise throughout this text is for openness and trust between staff and their clients and/or patients. This is sometimes easier to preach than practice, but essential to strive for, regardless of our own religious position and culture ... and in spite of all the pressures of working in the NHS.

The book provides a wealth of information and detail regarding the values and beliefs of many of the faith groups in the UK. The author writes to a set formula, which is easy to access and use.

However, I do have a few quibbles which I hope the author and publishers will consider for the next edition. It would be useful to have a pronunciation guide for unfamiliar words, e.g. the Zoroastrian word 'hvarshta'.

An important issue for some groups is female circumcision and this needs to be discussed in the context of the faith as well as culture.

The use of alternative therapies in medicine is now much more common, especially in primary care settings and alongside tradition medicine. It would be interesting and helpful to know the position and teaching of a particular faith (if any) on the use of these therapies.

This text will certainly be useful for midwives, neonatal and all child health nurses as well as health visitors. There is a considerable amount of information in the book that relates to the first year of life, ranging from breast feeding to infant naming ceremonies and for family life in general.

**Barbara Weller**  
 Nursing Editor

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