

# Religious Beliefs

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- 1. Taking the religion of patients seriously**
- 2. How best to understand religion?**
- 3. What religion might mean for particular ethical issues**

**Taking the religion of patients  
seriously**

# Religious patients encountering clinicians

*In the context of the fertility clinic:*

**Healthcare providers and the health care system in general is insensitive towards, uncomprehending of, or actively hostile to, faith issues and faith group members**

**(14 of 19 respondents)**

# Alienation from the system

Part of us I suppose felt oh this bit of the NHS erm doesn't accommodate people like us... erm... and we've just I guess we accepted that really.

(Catholic man)

But it did certainly feel that cos we were this particular kind of Catholic shape we wouldn't go through the square hole of the NHS.

(Catholic woman)

M: But [pause] you also know you are part of a machine. It felt to me like I was in a machine, which was actually you know sometimes reassuring, like it was efficient and everyone knew what they were doing, or gave the impression they knew what they were doing, and you were passed on to the next thing or the next person. But I also felt a bit that, you know, the machine only works if you don't erm step outside it.

I: Outside.....?

M: The boxes. That as a patient they are set up to deal with a certain kind or certain kinds of patient and if you are in some way outside that, they get irritated because it's not what they expect.

(Muslim woman)

**The default assumption  
of the fertility clinic  
is secular...**

**Is that also true of geriatric medicine?**

**How best to understand religion?**



Religion not so much a set of 'beliefs'  
in which one has 'faith'

Religion is more like a set of attitudes or instincts  
about the way the world is

- i. A sense that our lives are grounded in something bigger than ourselves
- ii. A sense that our lives are not wholly random
- iii. A sense that life may make demands of us
- iv. A sense that our lives are linked to each other

**What religion might mean for  
particular ethical issues**

## i. Gratitude for life

- Life is a good – but not the ultimate good

## ii. Respect for life

- One should do everything one reasonably can to preserve life
- In RC thought, ordinary vs extraordinary means

# Ordinary vs extraordinary means

- ordinary means are all forms of treatment for this patient in this situation that have a reasonable chance of benefit and do not impose excessive burdens
- extraordinary means are all forms of treatment for this patient in this situation that do not have a reasonable chance of benefit and/or do impose excessive burdens

# Ordinary vs extraordinary means

- Rules out futile treatment
- Governs decisions about withholding/withdrawing ('forgoing') treatment, including
  - DNAR orders
  - 'allowing patients to die' (*not* the same as euthanasia)

# Euthanasia/assisted suicide

- Not a complete theory of religious views on euthanasia/assisted suicide
- But may indicate why in general terms religious people may be more questioning of it