

# Spiritual Care in Chronic Pain

## Interdisciplinary Research for Interprofessional Practice in Medicine and Nursing

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### GOALS & CHALLENGES

- 1) The project investigates *the significance of the spiritual dimension in caring for chronic pain patients and develops a screening tool for its integration in regular health care.*
- 2) Based on the outcome from research related to the first aim, the development of an *empirically based teaching-learning instrument*, which can be used for the basic and advanced interprofessional healthcare education, shall be pursued.

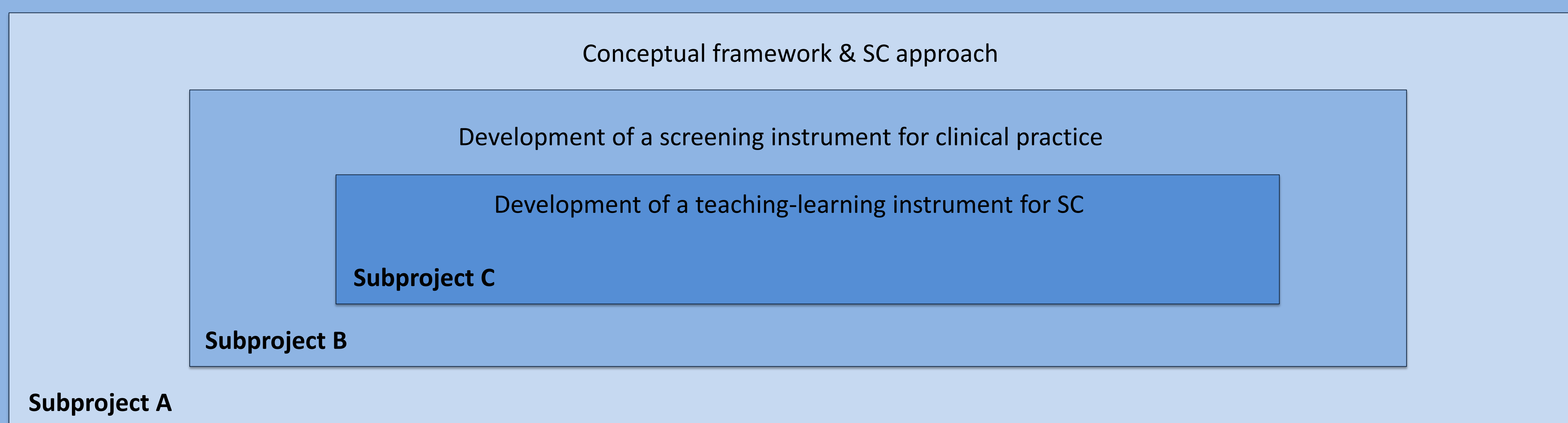
Little research has been conducted on the significance of interprofessional spiritual care (SC) in the treatment of chronic pain<sup>1</sup>, which is one of today's greatest challenges in healthcare provision.<sup>2</sup> Appropriate clinical and educational tools on SC are lacking; the communicational challenges in approaching pain patients are insufficiently addressed.<sup>3</sup>

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1) How can the quality of care for chronic pain patients be improved through the integration of spiritual aspects of pain within an interdisciplinary SC approach?
- 2) How do healthcare professionals adequately approach and communicate with chronic pain patients to find out about their spiritual needs and resources?
- 3) What is the potential contribution of SC to healthcare in general?
- 4) How do preparatory training with the e-learning tool impact practical communication performance?
- 5) Are the implemented training scenarios applicable to multi-professional learning scenarios?

### APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

The project espouses an interdisciplinary approach situated in the international research field of spiritual care, health communication research, and research on chronic pain. We combine a phenomenological investigation (A), data collection in focus groups, and the analysis of narrative interviews with the aim of developing a screening instrument regarding spiritual needs und resources (B) and a video-based teaching-learning instrument for chronic pain patient care (C):



#### Subproject A

**Goal**  
Establishment of the conceptual framework for the research process and development of an approach for SC as targeted in subprojects B and C. By integrating psychological, nursing and theological aspects of chronic pain care into the SC horizon, the interdisciplinary basis will be laid for the overall project. Besides outlining the key terms around which the research is built, a) a better understanding of pain through the analysis of its spiritual dimension and through the inclusion of the SC perspective will be achieved, and B) the profile of SC will be sharpened.

#### Approach

- 1) Conceptualisation of a working model of spiritual care in chronic pain
- 2) Phenomenology of chronic pain within in the horizon of SC
- 3) Concomitant analysis of the research process in subprojects B and C
- 4) Synthesis of the different perspectives on SC in chronic pain

September 2017 – February 2021

#### Subproject B

**Goal**  
Identification of spiritual key concerns and needs from the perspective of both affected chronic pain patients and healthcare professionals as an empirical basis for subsequent construction and psychometric validation of a screening instrument applicable to the spiritual dimension in clinical care for chronic pain patients.

#### Approach

- 1) Supra-analysis of video recordings with chronic pain patients & analysis of dimensions and eligibility of spiritual care assessment instruments (literature review)
- 2) Focus group interviews with 30-50 chronic pain patients and 40-60 healthcare professionals in 5 Swiss clinics for pain patients & analysis
- 3) Development of screening instrument & pre-test with 10 healthcare professionals (content validity) and 5 chronic pain patients (acceptance and comprehensibility)
- 4) Validation of screening instrument with 200 chronic pain patients

September 2017 – February 2020

#### Subproject C

**Goal**  
Development of a learning and teaching instrument for healthcare communication focused on SC in chronic pain, based on the empirical findings of subprojects A and B. Insights into communication aspects to be addressed in the learning phase both in relation to pain as well as to spirituality.

#### Approach

- 1) Analysis and discussion of the findings of subprojects A and B with regard to healthcare education
- 2) Needs assessment for targeted learners and identification of typical learning cases.
- 3) Specification of key learning objectives and communication skills, e.g. perception and sensibility for patients' spiritual concerns and resources, active invitation to engage in a dialogue on personal views and needs.
- 4) Implementation into the eLearning tool, production of learning videos with experienced role models
- 5) Evaluation of the learning and teaching tool.

February 2019 – February 2021

### EXPECTED RESULTS

- 1) Better understanding of the spiritual dimension of chronic pain, patients' spiritual needs and resources, and the profile of SC.
- 2) New treatment approach to chronic pain which systematically integrates the spiritual concerns and needs of patients.
- 3) A validated version of the screening instrument for clinical practice, which is accessible on the UZH website, together with short practical guidelines.
- 4) A learning-teaching instrument for SC, integrated into DocCom.Deutsch<sup>4</sup>, available to all institutions involved in its development and acquirable for further institutions.

### REFERENCES

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