

Chapter 9 Ritual and the management of misfortune

CLINICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

- 1 What *rituals* (social, religious, personal) exist in the patient's daily life? Do rituals play a central, pervasive role in the patient's life, and do they deal adequately with misfortune, illness and death?

In the consultation

- 2 What aspects of the *health professional's* behaviour, speech, dress, and techniques have a ritual aspect?
- 3 What *ritual symbols* are used?
- 4 What *associations* do these ritual symbols have for:
 - a the patient?
 - b the patient's family or friends?
 - c the health professional?
- 5 Does the ritual, or its absence, positively affect the patient's mental or physical health, or social relationships?
- 6 Does the ritual serve to integrate the patient back into the community, or to alienate him/her from it?
- 7 Does the ritual signal a biological and/or social *transition* in the patient's life?
- 8 What is the *effect* of the ritual, or its absence, on the psychological state of the health professional?

In hospital

- 9 What aspects of the patient's admission procedure, dress, behaviour, diet, medication and control over time and space have a ritual significance for the patient, and for the professional staff?
- 10 To what extent do these rituals accelerate or impede the patient's return to health?

In major life changes (pregnancy, birth, bereavement):

- 11 What rituals are used to symbolize the patient's biological and social *transition* in:
 - a his/her socio-cultural background?
 - b the clinical setting?
- 12 Is this ritual, or its absence, advantageous (or dangerous) to the patient's mental or physical health, or social relationships?
- 13 Should more ritual be used, in order to place the transition in a wider social, moral or religious context?

In dying and bereavement

- 14 How does the patient's *death culture* define the nature and requirements of:
 - the moment of biological death?
 - the stages of social death?
- 15 What *rituals* are a feature of the patient's death culture, regarding:
 - a the preparation of the deceased?
 - b the disposal of the deceased?
 - c the timing and locality of the funeral?
 - d the role of traditional death attendants (TDAs)?
 - e the role of religious figures?
 - f the role of health professionals?
 - g the nature and duration of the grieving process?