

# Clinical Christianity

By Jim Pinder, JD, MBA



*Jim Pinder, JD, MBA, faculty advisor for Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy's student chapter of Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International presented a leadership certificate to PY3 student Alexandria Taylor on April 14. Alexandria was the outgoing president of their student chapter. She implemented a clinical approach to the activities of the student organization with great success.*

A student chapter of Christian Pharmacists Fellowship International should be more than a group of students who pray under a tree before mid-term and final exams. This was the thinking of outgoing Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy CPFI President, Alexandria Taylor. She envisioned a student organization that took on clinical challenges by utilizing their faith. But what clinical challenges can a group of under-tree praying students undertake?

CPFI students can be trained and equipped to assess a patient's spiritual health. They can have a conversation with a patient about how their illness has affected their relationship with their family and God. They can communicate the gospel in a way that is comforting and non-confrontational, all with the patient's express permission. They can address issues of whole person care. These are critical skills that students at a university with a motto "To Make Man Whole" and a mission "To continue the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ" must master.

Alexandria Taylor organized a weekend training event in January 2016 by Medical Strategic Network ([www.medsn.org](http://www.medsn.org)). They are experts in training students to accomplish the task of taking a patient's spiritual history. As a non-clinician faculty advisor at our school for CPFI, I wanted to participate and see how I could be involved.

After the training, we embarked on an adventure at Loma Linda University Medical Center. Consulting with a unit's charge nurse about which patients to exclude from the project (for a variety of reasons) came first. We engaged patients in groups of two to avoid overwhelming them. After a brief series of statements about the purpose of the interaction, the conversations became intensely personal. Patients would talk about questioning why God would let them get so sick. Some would talk about feeling hopeful as their condition improved. Others shared dismay about a worsening condition. Tears were a frequent companion of the patients. The interaction culminated with prayer and an encouraging word about getting well.

My mind was blown. I had just interacted with students and patients at a level I never thought possible. It became apparent that every one of our students needed to have this experience as this experience defined us as a School and University. To be a Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy graduate, one must know how to interact with patients on a spiritual level.

The investment Alexandria Taylor and the student chapter of CPFI made to bring this experience to campus will not end with the completed school year. All first-year pharmacy students now receive four hours of training in spiritual care and two hours of practical experience at Loma Linda University Medical Center as part of their Professional Development course. Data is being collected to see if students continue their spiritual care experience after the initial training and practicum. CPFI students have found a way to practice Clinical Christianity and it will impact the lives of every student at Loma Linda University School of Pharmacy and the patients whom they encounter.

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