



## The Sacred and the Profane

Lee E. Mortenson

To cite this article: Lee E. Mortenson (1997) The Sacred and the Profane, *Oncology Issues*, 12:2, 4-4, DOI: [10.1080/10463356.1997.11904665](https://doi.org/10.1080/10463356.1997.11904665)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10463356.1997.11904665>



Published online: 18 Oct 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 2



View related articles [↗](#)

## Oncology Issues

The Journal of the  
Association of Community Cancer Centers

### Senior Editor

Lee E. Mortenson, D.P.A.  
ACCC Executive Director

### Managing Editor

Donald Jewler

### Assistant Editor

Cara Egan

### Advertising Representative

William J. Asmann

### Art Director

Tom Suzuki

### Designers

Constance D. Dillman

Hea-Ran Cho

### EDITORIAL BOARD

Chairman, Carl G. Kardinal, M.D.

Kent Giles, M.P.P.M.

Gordon R. Klatt, M.D.

Michael E. Mohnsen, M.H.A.

Nancy A. Nowak, M.A.

Cary A. Presant, M.D., F.A.C.P.

Teresa D. Smith, R.N., M.S.N.

James L. Wade III, M.D.

R. Lawrence White, M.D.

Robert T. Woodburn, M.D., Ph.D.

James Zabora, M.S.W.

### ACCC OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

#### President

John E. Feldmann, M.D. (Mobile, Ala.)

#### President-Elect

James L. Wade III, M.D. (Decatur, Ill.)

#### Secretary

Gordon R. Klatt, M.D. (Tacoma, Wash.)

#### Treasurer

David H. Regan, M.D. (Portland, Oreg.)

#### Immediate Past-President

Diane Van Ostenberg, B.S., R.N.

(Grand Rapids, Mich.)

#### Trustees

Edward L. Braud, M.D. (Springfield, Ill.)

Robert J. Brooks, M.D. (Tucson, Ariz.)

Susan J. Brown, R.N., M.S.N., C.R.N.P., A.O.C.N.  
(Upland, Pa.)

Dale E. Fuller, M.D. (Dallas, Tex.)

Gordon R. Klatt, M.D. (Tacoma, Wash.)

Charles H. Nash III, M.D. (Tulsa, Okla.)

Nancy A. Nowak, M.A. (Memphis, Tenn.)

Diane M. Otte, R.N., M.S. (Omaha, Nebr.)

Teresa Smith, R.N., M.S.N. (Springfield, Ill.)

Joyce G. Stair, M.S., R.N. (Ann Arbor, Mich.)

R. Lawrence White, M.D. (Washington, D.C.)

Member of Business  
Publications Audit, Inc.



*Oncology Issues* is published bimonthly at the Association of Community Cancer Centers, Executive Office, 11600 Nebel St., Suite 201, Rockville, MD 20852. Copyright ©1997. Association of Community Cancer Centers. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission in writing. Editorial correspondence, changes of address, manuscripts, and letters to the editor should be addressed to: Lee E. Mortenson, Senior Editor, *Oncology Issues*, 11600 Nebel St., Suite 201, Rockville, MD 20852.

Articles, editorials, letters to the editor, and other contributed materials represent the opinions of the authors and do not represent the opinions of the Association of Community Cancer Centers or the institution with which the author is affiliated unless the contrary is specified.

#### Subscription Rates

Basic rate: \$20 per year for health care providers; \$40 per year for others. ACCC membership dues pay for general, delegate, and chapter member subscriptions. Back issues available for \$5 per copy, prepaid. Bulk rates available upon request.

#### Advertising

Send correspondence, display advertising, insertion orders, printing materials to Managing Editor, *Oncology Issues*, 11600 Nebel St., Suite 201, Rockville, MD 20852. Questions for general information may be directed to 301/984-9496.

#### Postage Privileges

Postmaster: Please send address changes to Association of Community Cancer Centers, 11600 Nebel St., Suite 201, Rockville, MD 20852.

## FROM THE EDITOR



## The Sacred and the Profane

by Lee E. Mortenson, D.P.A.

**W**hat is it we hold sacred? For most of my life, I have veered away from the sacred, regarding it as a series of meaningless rules that have little relationship to everyday reality and which, in many cases, appeared to suppress diversity and individual decision making. I hope you will forgive my ignorance.

Culturally, we have tended to put down the sacred as not being "cool." Only recently as the baby boomers have started to hit advanced middle age have we seen the renaissance of book titles that provoke our attention and thoughtfulness, such as Thomas Moore's series on the *Care of the Soul* or Coleman Bark's translations of Rumi's provocative Sufi poetry.

Still, we have a long way to go. Reading and thinking about soulfulness and incorporating the idea into the everyday world are tough under the best of circumstances. And, after years of not paying attention, indeed of disparaging the sacred, we are generally clueless about how to respond to it.

One group to which I belong says that to hold something sacred is to entrust, keep in confidence, respect, and honor. It's a good, workable definition that suggests sacred space, for example, is a physical area where men and women can deal with personal and metaphysical issues and be safe.

This is a place of vulnerability and danger and is to be honored by the trust and respect shown by all that are present.

Two very different examples of how we interact with the sacred have raised my emotional temperature over the past few days. What they have in common is a triumph of personal need over sacred trust.

The first was a recent appearance in Washington, D.C., of Whirling Dervishes from Turkey. Despite the request of the evening's moderator that the audience recognize the dance as a sacred religious ritual in a sacred space, a number of the audience members couldn't ignore their personal need to take a picture of the dervishes whirling, nor could they refrain from reflexively applauding at the end of the performance. While these might be considered to be common discourtesies, they indicate how readily we ignore someone else's traditions and requests if they interfere with our own habits and needs.

A second example may strike you as more important, but the two are linked at their core. At ACCC's recent Oncology Presidents' Retreat, we heard from our oncology nursing colleagues that a number of registered nurses are reporting that their hospitals are prohibiting them from wearing any name badge or other indication that they are an R.N., ostensibly as a means of keeping patients from knowing how few of their personnel are qualified for the work that they are doing! Of course, if hospitals can prohibit nurses from indicating their credentials, they can do it to others. Even if this practice affects only nurses, it is still profane.

Honoring an individual's personal achievement or the wishes of a religious order to hold its space sacred are hallmarks of our respect for each other. This respect means that we cannot always have our personal needs met. While it may seem too late for us to suddenly recognize the sacred, perhaps we are just in time to begin to recognize that we must model respect, honor, and courtesy as a way to bring soulfulness back to our culture. ■