

Distant Intercessory Prayer Research

Byrd (1988) studied effects of IP on 393 coronary care unit patients:

- Randomized, controlled, double-blind study

 - Patients aware they were participating in an IP study

- Directed, daily IP by a team (1 to 3) of Christian intercessors *only* during hospital stay

 - Given pt's first name, diagnosis, updates on condition

- Length of hospitalization, new problems, diagnoses, and therapeutic events during hospitalization were assessed.

 - IP group had significantly fewer

 - cases of congestive heart failure, pneumonia

 - and neural fever, arthritis, ureters, and intubation/ventilation.

 - No difference in length of hospitalization between groups.

- "Hospital course" score (i.e. good, intermediate, bad) was significantly better in the IP group.

 - Comprised of factors like new diagnoses, problems, therapies, morbidity level and risk of death

1
00:00:06,619 --> 00:00:03,080
I'm and what prayer begins to do is to

2
00:00:09,140 --> 00:00:06,629
attenuate those stress responses if

3
00:00:11,360 --> 00:00:09,150
those stress responses are activated too

4
00:00:13,039 --> 00:00:11,370
frequently or for to prolonged a period

5
00:00:14,709 --> 00:00:13,049
of time again a lot of literature that

6
00:00:17,480 --> 00:00:14,719
demonstrates that that can be

7
00:00:20,210 --> 00:00:17,490
detrimental to one's health so those

8
00:00:21,849 --> 00:00:20,220
processes are attenuated what becomes

9
00:00:24,380 --> 00:00:21,859
augmented is the parasympathetic

10
00:00:26,240 --> 00:00:24,390
functioning and we get lots of goodies

11
00:00:29,720 --> 00:00:26,250
from parasympathetic functioning

12
00:00:31,880 --> 00:00:29,730
pro-social behavior positive affect the

13
00:00:34,610 --> 00:00:31,890

anabolic processes of the body are

14

00:00:37,850 --> 00:00:34,620

enhanced so its restorative reparative

15

00:00:39,860 --> 00:00:37,860

and of course the immune system to would

16

00:00:41,540 --> 00:00:39,870

be influenced in ways because of the

17

00:00:43,790 --> 00:00:41,550

intimate relationship between the

18

00:00:46,100 --> 00:00:43,800

nervous system and the immune system the

19

00:00:51,950 --> 00:00:46,110

immune systems functioning is enhanced

20

00:00:53,389 --> 00:00:51,960

in ways that would promote health as I

21

00:00:55,610 --> 00:00:53,399

mentioned it's a different animal when

22

00:00:57,470 --> 00:00:55,620

we talk about intercessory prayer so

23

00:00:59,540 --> 00:00:57,480

private periyar personal prayer we

24

00:01:01,520 --> 00:00:59,550

understand it we understand the outcomes

25

00:01:04,880 --> 00:01:01,530

more so we understand the naturalistic

26
00:01:06,710 --> 00:01:04,890
mechanisms again that provide the

27
00:01:09,230 --> 00:01:06,720
connection between prayer and outcomes

28
00:01:11,420 --> 00:01:09,240
when we talk about intercessory prayer

29
00:01:13,760 --> 00:01:11,430
we are talking about again prayer that's

30
00:01:17,480 --> 00:01:13,770
offered by an individual on behalf of

31
00:01:20,270 --> 00:01:17,490
someone else oftentimes the intercessors

32
00:01:22,700 --> 00:01:20,280
and the recipient are separated by large

33
00:01:25,160 --> 00:01:22,710
distance there may be an intercessory

34
00:01:27,200 --> 00:01:25,170
east coast who's praying for someone in

35
00:01:29,690 --> 00:01:27,210
the Midwest or on the other side of the

36
00:01:32,810 --> 00:01:29,700
planet and yet there's some data to

37
00:01:36,200 --> 00:01:32,820
suggest that health can be shifted in

38
00:01:38,450 --> 00:01:36,210

those individuals so consequently you

39

00:01:40,280 --> 00:01:38,460

we're not sure if the phenomenon exists

40

00:01:41,749 --> 00:01:40,290

we're not sure what the mechanisms are

41

00:01:43,910 --> 00:01:41,759

so there's a lot of debate in the

42

00:01:46,520 --> 00:01:43,920

literature around even conducting this

43

00:01:48,980 --> 00:01:46,530

research what I want to talk about today

44

00:01:51,920 --> 00:01:48,990

is three studies to set the foundation

45

00:01:54,710 --> 00:01:51,930

of in part why I went ahead and did my

46

00:01:57,560 --> 00:01:54,720

study on the non-human primates I want

47

00:01:59,600 --> 00:01:57,570

to begin with bird study in 1988 there

48

00:02:01,370 --> 00:01:59,610

was some literature on intercessory

49

00:02:03,499 --> 00:02:01,380

prayer that occurred prior but bird

50

00:02:05,940 --> 00:02:03,509

study was really the seminal piece of

51
00:02:08,369 --> 00:02:05,950
research that began

52
00:02:10,139 --> 00:02:08,379
increased interest in their intercessory

53
00:02:13,070 --> 00:02:10,149
prayer and led to the various trials

54
00:02:15,809 --> 00:02:13,080
that we've seen in the past 20 years

55
00:02:17,369 --> 00:02:15,819
what bird decided to do is take a look

56
00:02:19,559 --> 00:02:17,379
at the effects of intercessory prayer

57
00:02:24,390 --> 00:02:19,569
and approximately 400 coronary care unit

58
00:02:27,270 --> 00:02:24,400
patients the trial was randomized it was

59
00:02:29,309 --> 00:02:27,280
control that was double-blind patients

60
00:02:31,830 --> 00:02:29,319
were aware that they were participating

61
00:02:33,600 --> 00:02:31,840
in an IP study they were not aware

62
00:02:36,030 --> 00:02:33,610
whether or not they were receiving

63
00:02:38,070 --> 00:02:36,040

prayer so they were blinded to that the

64

00:02:40,170 --> 00:02:38,080

prayer was directed and when we talk

65

00:02:42,750 --> 00:02:40,180

about prayer being directed this would

66

00:02:44,729 --> 00:02:42,760

be instructions being given to the

67

00:02:48,539 --> 00:02:44,739

intercessors that they would pray for

68

00:02:50,880 --> 00:02:48,549

particular outcomes it happens often

69

00:02:53,640 --> 00:02:50,890

frequently in fact that intercessors are

70

00:02:55,620 --> 00:02:53,650

given directions there's little tracking

71

00:02:57,600 --> 00:02:55,630

whether or not the intercessors actually

72

00:02:59,460 --> 00:02:57,610

follow the directions because people who

73

00:03:01,710 --> 00:02:59,470

are engaged in an intercessory prayer

74

00:03:03,089 --> 00:03:01,720

practice can pray in a variety of

75

00:03:05,069 --> 00:03:03,099

different ways for health and healing

76

00:03:07,740 --> 00:03:05,079

but in this case it was directed daily

77

00:03:10,530 --> 00:03:07,750

IP by a team of Christian intercessors

78

00:03:12,870 --> 00:03:10,540

only during hospitalization for these

79

00:03:15,990 --> 00:03:12,880

patients they were given the patient's

80

00:03:17,910 --> 00:03:16,000

first name the diagnosis and updates on

81

00:03:20,970 --> 00:03:17,920

the condition of the patient while the

82

00:03:23,129 --> 00:03:20,980

patient was hospitalized what word took

83

00:03:25,860 --> 00:03:23,139

a look at was a number of factors length

84

00:03:27,960 --> 00:03:25,870

of hospitalization new problems that may

85

00:03:29,340 --> 00:03:27,970

have developed in the patient diagnosis

86

00:03:32,340 --> 00:03:29,350

therapeutic events during

87

00:03:35,550 --> 00:03:32,350

hospitalization were assessed now there

88

00:03:37,590 --> 00:03:35,560

were approximately 30 variables that

89

00:03:39,449 --> 00:03:37,600

bird was looking at so out of the 30

90

00:03:41,280 --> 00:03:39,459

some-odd variables that were looked at

91

00:03:44,099 --> 00:03:41,290

there were a few that were in fact

92

00:03:46,530 --> 00:03:44,109

significant the group that received the

93

00:03:48,199 --> 00:03:46,540

prayer was favored for fewer cases of

94

00:03:51,420 --> 00:03:48,209

congestive heart failure and pneumonia

95

00:03:53,699 --> 00:03:51,430

they required fewer antibiotics fewer

96

00:03:57,180 --> 00:03:53,709

diuretics and less intubation and

97

00:04:00,180 --> 00:03:57,190

ventilation bird also created a hospital

98

00:04:03,059 --> 00:04:00,190

course score and he stratified by good

99

00:04:06,059 --> 00:04:03,069

intermediate and bad and what were took

100

00:04:08,520 --> 00:04:06,069

a look at was numbers of new diagnosis

101
00:04:10,949 --> 00:04:08,530
therapies morbidity level risk of death

102
00:04:13,559 --> 00:04:10,959
and created this hospital course score

103
00:04:16,560 --> 00:04:13,569
which was also favored in the IP group

104
00:04:18,000 --> 00:04:16,570
their course was better than the

105
00:04:20,610 --> 00:04:18,010
patients who did not receive

106
00:04:22,290 --> 00:04:20,620
prayer for about a decade there was

107
00:04:24,540 --> 00:04:22,300
little that was happening in terms of

108
00:04:27,840 --> 00:04:24,550
prayer research the next study of some

109
00:04:29,550 --> 00:04:27,850
notice Harris's work in 99 driven in

110
00:04:32,220 --> 00:04:29,560
part by the fact that there had been no

111
00:04:34,500 --> 00:04:32,230
further IP research and they wanted to

112
00:04:37,290 --> 00:04:34,510
replicate bird study to see what they

113
00:04:39,450 --> 00:04:37,300

themselves would come up with they also

114

00:04:41,130 --> 00:04:39,460

use coronary care unit patients the

115

00:04:43,560 --> 00:04:41,140

sample approximately doubled it was

116

00:04:46,110 --> 00:04:43,570

close to a thousand also randomised

117

00:04:48,660 --> 00:04:46,120

controlled this was completely blind it

118

00:04:50,460 --> 00:04:48,670

was triple blind patients and staff were

119

00:04:53,030 --> 00:04:50,470

unaware that a trial was even being

120

00:04:55,290 --> 00:04:53,040

conducted so this was happening

121

00:04:58,230 --> 00:04:55,300

independently of any patients knowledge

122

00:05:00,720 --> 00:04:58,240

of staff's knowledge once again directed

123

00:05:02,730 --> 00:05:00,730

prayer daily five Christian intercessors

124

00:05:05,730 --> 00:05:02,740

following admission the prayer continued

125

00:05:08,580 --> 00:05:05,740

here for 28 days the intercessors were

126

00:05:10,800 --> 00:05:08,590

only given the patient's first name so

127

00:05:12,900 --> 00:05:10,810

they may have been given John or Mary

128

00:05:14,730 --> 00:05:12,910

even though out of the thousand patients

129

00:05:17,520 --> 00:05:14,740

there may have been multiple John's or

130

00:05:20,220 --> 00:05:17,530

multiple Mary's first name only the

131

00:05:22,110 --> 00:05:20,230

primary endpoint for this study was a

132

00:05:25,110 --> 00:05:22,120

score that was created by the research

133

00:05:26,790 --> 00:05:25,120

team the mahi CCU score and mahi is in

134

00:05:29,370 --> 00:05:26,800

an acronym verb Mid America Heart

135

00:05:31,770 --> 00:05:29,380

Institute the Medical Center where the

136

00:05:34,440 --> 00:05:31,780

study was based beeping then this

137

00:05:36,930 --> 00:05:34,450

primary endpoint was based on the

138

00:05:38,910 --> 00:05:36,940

hospital course score they created their

139

00:05:41,040 --> 00:05:38,920

own measure out of a number of factors

140

00:05:43,560 --> 00:05:41,050

from relatively minor occurrences like

141

00:05:46,190 --> 00:05:43,570

needing antibiotics to fairly major

142

00:05:48,930 --> 00:05:46,200

occurrences for example the patient died

143

00:05:50,670 --> 00:05:48,940

those outcomes were weighted so

144

00:05:52,260 --> 00:05:50,680

antibiotics would have been weighted

145

00:05:55,950 --> 00:05:52,270

much differently of course and if the

146

00:05:57,510 --> 00:05:55,960

patient ended up dying and there was no

147

00:05:59,520 --> 00:05:57,520

difference in terms of hospital stay

148

00:06:00,870 --> 00:05:59,530

just like birds group that didn't make

149

00:06:03,930 --> 00:06:00,880

any difference between the groups

150

00:06:07,050 --> 00:06:03,940

however looking at the mahi CCU score

151
00:06:10,230 --> 00:06:07,060
the weighted score the IP group fared

152
00:06:13,170 --> 00:06:10,240
better they also decided to just take a

153
00:06:15,150 --> 00:06:13,180
look an actual count of events so an

154
00:06:16,830 --> 00:06:15,160
unweighted score and compared the two

155
00:06:19,410 --> 00:06:16,840
groups and once again the group that

156
00:06:23,730 --> 00:06:19,420
received prayer fared better than the

157
00:06:26,550 --> 00:06:23,740
group that was not prayed for let's move

158
00:06:27,900 --> 00:06:26,560
forward a few years to the most recent

159
00:06:29,160 --> 00:06:27,910
trial that

160
00:06:32,490 --> 00:06:29,170
has gained attention in the literature

161
00:06:35,340 --> 00:06:32,500
and that was benson study in 2006 it was

162
00:06:37,560 --> 00:06:35,350
the most ambitious undertaking to date

163
00:06:40,320 --> 00:06:37,570

to study the effects of intercessory

164

00:06:42,330 --> 00:06:40,330

prayer the questions that this study

165

00:06:43,710 --> 00:06:42,340

posed were somewhat different than what

166

00:06:46,140 --> 00:06:43,720

we've seen in little bit in the

167

00:06:47,910 --> 00:06:46,150

literature to this point part of the

168

00:06:50,160 --> 00:06:47,920

interest of the researchers was to

169

00:06:52,530 --> 00:06:50,170

examine whether it was intercessory

170

00:06:54,870 --> 00:06:52,540

prayer itself or the knowledge or

171

00:06:57,630 --> 00:06:54,880

certainty of receiving intercessory

172

00:06:59,540 --> 00:06:57,640

prayer that would influence both primary

173

00:07:02,070 --> 00:06:59,550

outcomes which were complications

174

00:07:04,740 --> 00:07:02,080

relatively minor complications patients

175

00:07:07,380 --> 00:07:04,750

would experience or secondary outcomes

176
00:07:09,750 --> 00:07:07,390
which were more major major events or

177
00:07:12,660 --> 00:07:09,760
mortality and cabbage patients within 30

178
00:07:14,580 --> 00:07:12,670
days of cabbage surgery the patients

179
00:07:17,910 --> 00:07:14,590
were aware that they were participating

180
00:07:20,790 --> 00:07:17,920
in an IP study there were three groups

181
00:07:23,880 --> 00:07:20,800
of approximately 1,800 patients total so

182
00:07:26,280 --> 00:07:23,890
about 600 patients per group there were

183
00:07:28,530 --> 00:07:26,290
two groups that were uncertain of their

184
00:07:31,440 --> 00:07:28,540
receipt of prayer out of those two

185
00:07:33,870 --> 00:07:31,450
groups one group received prayer the

186
00:07:36,210 --> 00:07:33,880
other group did not but both groups knew

187
00:07:39,270 --> 00:07:36,220
that they might possibly be receiving it

188
00:07:42,150 --> 00:07:39,280

the third group was told they were

189

00:07:45,930 --> 00:07:42,160

receiving prayer and in fact received

190

00:07:48,390 --> 00:07:45,940

prayer directed intercessory prayer was

191

00:07:50,940 --> 00:07:48,400

provided for 14 days beginning the night

192

00:07:53,790 --> 00:07:50,950

before surgery there were three groups

193

00:07:55,830 --> 00:07:53,800

of Christian intercessors there was no

194

00:07:57,720 --> 00:07:55,840

difference in secondary outcomes across

195

00:08:00,540 --> 00:07:57,730

the group so there were no major event

196

00:08:02,400 --> 00:08:00,550

differences no death differences if we

197

00:08:04,860 --> 00:08:02,410

took a look at the two groups that were

198

00:08:07,110 --> 00:08:04,870

uncertain about receiving prayer there

199

00:08:09,840 --> 00:08:07,120

were no differences between those two

200

00:08:11,700 --> 00:08:09,850

groups but in the third group that were

201
00:08:13,830 --> 00:08:11,710
certain that they were receiving prayer

202
00:08:16,290 --> 00:08:13,840
and in fact received it there were

203
00:08:18,330 --> 00:08:16,300
significantly greater complications in

204
00:08:23,790 --> 00:08:18,340
that group when compared with the

205
00:08:26,900 --> 00:08:23,800
uncertain groups we can also of course

206
00:08:29,250 --> 00:08:26,910
look to reviews and see what

207
00:08:30,720 --> 00:08:29,260
meta-analysis or a systematic review may

208
00:08:33,240 --> 00:08:30,730
tell us about the body of literature

209
00:08:35,580 --> 00:08:33,250
that's out there the waters remain

210
00:08:36,220 --> 00:08:35,590
muddied if we look at reviews the data

211
00:08:37,920 --> 00:08:36,230
is

212
00:08:41,440 --> 00:08:37,930
ethical the Cochrane Collaboration

213
00:08:43,690 --> 00:08:41,450

conducted a review in 2008 and they

214

00:08:45,280 --> 00:08:43,700

summarized interpretation of the results

215

00:08:47,470 --> 00:08:45,290

can't be done with great confidence

216

00:08:50,230 --> 00:08:47,480

because indeed the data are equivocal

217

00:08:52,150 --> 00:08:50,240

however they're finding it findings

218

00:08:54,700 --> 00:08:52,160

indicated that there was enough evidence

219

00:08:57,280 --> 00:08:54,710

that further study into the effects of

220

00:09:01,300 --> 00:08:57,290

intercessory prayer on ill health would

221

00:09:03,460 --> 00:09:01,310

be justified the other camp masters and

222

00:09:06,100 --> 00:09:03,470

Spielman's are good examples of the

223

00:09:08,350 --> 00:09:06,110

secondary camp that essentially says

224

00:09:11,140 --> 00:09:08,360

this is a waste of time we should not be

225

00:09:13,390 --> 00:09:11,150

spending resources etc studying

226

00:09:16,930 --> 00:09:13,400

intercessory prayer their meta-analysis

227

00:09:19,840 --> 00:09:16,940

indicated a very small effect size and

228

00:09:24,610 --> 00:09:19,850

the efficacy of IP and healing didn't

229

00:09:26,710 --> 00:09:24,620

even approached significance so let me

230

00:09:29,290 --> 00:09:26,720

summarize some of the criticism this

231

00:09:32,410 --> 00:09:29,300

really is a highly contentious area of

232

00:09:33,970 --> 00:09:32,420

study there's a lot of emotion we see in

233

00:09:36,490 --> 00:09:33,980

the literature driven behind the

234

00:09:39,790 --> 00:09:36,500

criticisms of these studies and so on so

235

00:09:42,880 --> 00:09:39,800

I have a couple of slides of summary of

236

00:09:45,700 --> 00:09:42,890

that the criticisms essentially fall

237

00:09:48,880 --> 00:09:45,710

into one of I have three categories but

238

00:09:51,130 --> 00:09:48,890

there could be for theoretical ethical

239

00:09:53,590 --> 00:09:51,140

methodological criticisms and there's

240

00:09:56,290 --> 00:09:53,600

also theological criticisms of even

241

00:09:58,060 --> 00:09:56,300

approaching this kind of work first of