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KEY WORD: SPIRITUAL HEALING/HIV INFECTION/BUDDHIST

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Spiritual healing is an important means to help persons with HIV infection in coping with illness and empowering them to find meaning in life. The purpose of this study was to explore spiritual healing in Buddhist persons with HIV infection. The sample was composed of 40 Buddhist persons with HIV infection who participated in Wednesday HIV Self-help Group, Chulalongkorn Hospital. Data were collected by open-ended structure interview, and were analyzed by content analysis.

The results revealed that 70% of these HIV infected persons had fear of death, fear of family and social rejection, and fear of being ugly when at first being informed of their HIV infection. They used expression of feeling (32.5%) and thinking of suicide (27.5%) as ways of facing problems. There were 92.5% of these persons who reflected on their Buddhist faith and used Buddhist teachings as ways of spiritual healing which were appened in ten strategies: ritual 97.5%; practicing relaxation/meditation 70%; performing prayer 47.5%; creating new meaning to find new goals of life 40%; exchanging feeling with spiritual counselor 27.5%; helping others 17.5; increasing sense of self-worth 12.5%; reflecting on dynamic process of life cycle 12.5%; instilling hope 7.5%; and sacrifice 7.5%. In addition, the Buddhist teachings (Dharma) which these HIV infected persons used to guide their spiritual healing prescribe refraining from evil, doing good things, and purifying the mind.

This study suggests to promote spiritual healing in persons with HIV infection for the sake of better coping with illness. Particularly, application of Buddhist teachings in caring and counseling for these persons who are Buddhist could empower them in gaining well-being to live with HIV infection.