

## **The Effects of Distant Intercessory Prayer : a randomised controlled trial of patient outcomes in a cardio-thoracic surgical hospital unit**

### **Results:**

This study presents the results of an indirect replication of the studies by Byrd (1988) and Harris *et al.* (1999) that suggested that intercessory prayer had a positive influence on the evolution of clinical outcomes of coronary heart disease patients. A measure of patients' religious/spiritual concerns, practice and beliefs was added.

We attempted to contribute to this body of research, by studying: a) the effects of distant intercessory prayer by others on the evolution of clinical outcomes of coronary by-pass surgical patients and b) the association between the patients' spiritual and religious concerns (including the practice of personal prayer) and the evolution of the patients' own clinical outcome.

A total of 74 surgical coronary by-pass patients participated in this study. The patients were randomly assigned to two groups, *prayed for* group and *not prayed for* group by an external experimenter. All patients suffered from coronary artery disease and had clinical indication for bypass surgery. Thirteen intercessors were recruited from two organised prayer groups. All intercessors committed themselves to, at least, one daily prayer period of individual prayer for "*the improvement of patient's X health condition*". Participants, doctors and experimenter in the Cardio-Thoracic Surgical Ward were kept blind to the assignment to either one of the groups during the length of the trial.

The results suggest that there were no significant differences between the *prayed for* and *not prayed for* groups on the evolution of clinical outcomes. Also, there seems to be no association between patients' scores on a scale of religiosity/spirituality and clinical outcomes.

### **Published Work:**

Howard, G. S., Hill, T. L., Maxwell, S. E., Coulter-Kern, M., Coulter-Kern, R., Baptista, T. M., Farias, M., & Coelho, C. (2009). What's wrong with research literatures? And how to make them right. *Review of General Psychology*, 13(2), 146-166. doi: 10.1037/a0015319

### **Researcher's Contacts:**

Telmo Mourinho Baptista  
Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação da Universidade de Lisboa  
Alameda da Universidade, 1649-013 Lisboa  
Portugal  
Phone: 21 7943645  
Fax: 21 7933408  
E-mail: [telmo@fpce.ul.pt](mailto:telmo@fpce.ul.pt)