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Psychometric Properties of the Image of God Scale in Breast Cancer Survivors

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The Image of God Scale (IGS) is a measure of how individuals perceive God's level of interaction in their lives and His quickness to anger (Bader & Froese, 2005). Recent studies have identified associations between an individual's view of God and specific behaviors and beliefs, both religious and societal (Froese & Bader, 2007; Maynard, Gorsuch, & Bjorck, 2001; Wong-McDonald & Gorsuch, 2004). Life principles and core goals or strivings are outward manifestations of an individual's worldview (Koltko-Rivera, 2004; Vidal, 2008). An individual's view of God is thought to influence core strivings and life principles (Emmons, Cheung, & Tehrani, 1998; Maynard et al., 2001; Pargament, Magyar-Russell, & Murray-Swank, 2005). For that reason, one's view of God may be a key component in understanding how an individual deals with a stressful situation such as a diagnosis of cancer.

Studies in religious, sociologic, and psychological literature have used various measures of how an individual views God (Hill, 1995; Hill & Hood, 1999; Holm, 1995). Most of those instruments have had limited use in healthcare research, possibly because of their complexity. The healthcare literature is replete with studies of spirituality and religion. As a result, many measures exist of these constructs and a lack of consensus exists in defining them (Puchalski et al., 2009). In addition, a clinically useful method of classifying an individual's image of God, apart from specific religions, has not been identified. The continual development of new measures of religion and spirituality may indicate that current measures do not satisfactorily answer key questions: Is there a way to assess religion and spirituality that is common to multiple religions and sects? Regardless of the god or gods worshipped, is there a perspective that reflects common behaviors and responses to the individual's god? A quantifiable measure addressing those questions would contribute to a greater understanding of the relationships between religion and spirituality

Purpose/Objectives: To examine the psychometric properties of the Image of God Scale (IGS) in a clinical population.

Design: Descriptive, cross-sectional.

Setting: University and community oncology practices in the southeastern United States.

Sample: 123 breast cancer survivors no more than two years from completion of treatment.

Methods: Scale reliability was determined with the coefficient alpha. Instrument dimensionality was examined using principal component analysis. Construct validity was evaluated by examining correlations with other instruments used in the study.

Main Research Variables: An individual's image of God.

Findings: Internal consistency was strong (anger subscale = 0.8; engagement subscale = 0.89). The principle component analysis resulted in a two-factor solution with items loading uniquely on Factor 1—Engagement (8) and Factor 2—Anger (6). Significant correlations between the IGS and religious coping support convergence on a God concept. Correlations with psychological well-being, psychological distress, and concern about recurrence were nonsignificant (engagement) or inverse (anger), supporting discrimination between concepts of God and psychological adjustment.

Conclusions: The IGS is a unique measure of how God is viewed by the depth and character of His involvement with the individual and the world.

Implications for Nursing: The IGS may be a measure that can transcend sects, denominations, and religions by identifying the image of God that underlies and defines an individuals' worldview, which influences their attitudes and behaviors.

and health. Denominational or sect affiliation has not served as a good proxy measure for identifying an individual's religious or spiritual response to threat, loss, or challenge stressors. Every major religion or belief system has more than one main division and within each main division are often multiple subgroups. As an example, Christianity can be grouped in the following ways: main divisions (Protestant