

P11: Digital Spiritual Care

As healthcare chaplains work in increasingly digital healthcare settings, how spiritual care is practiced, assessed and documented, changes. In this project, we examine the complex and ongoing developments that accompany the integration of professional spiritual care into digital care settings and engage in extensive knowledge exchange with scholars and practitioners in Europe and North America. In the first phase, we used an interdisciplinary approach to investigate the emergence of “telechaplancy” and its use to deliver spiritual care in outpatient settings.

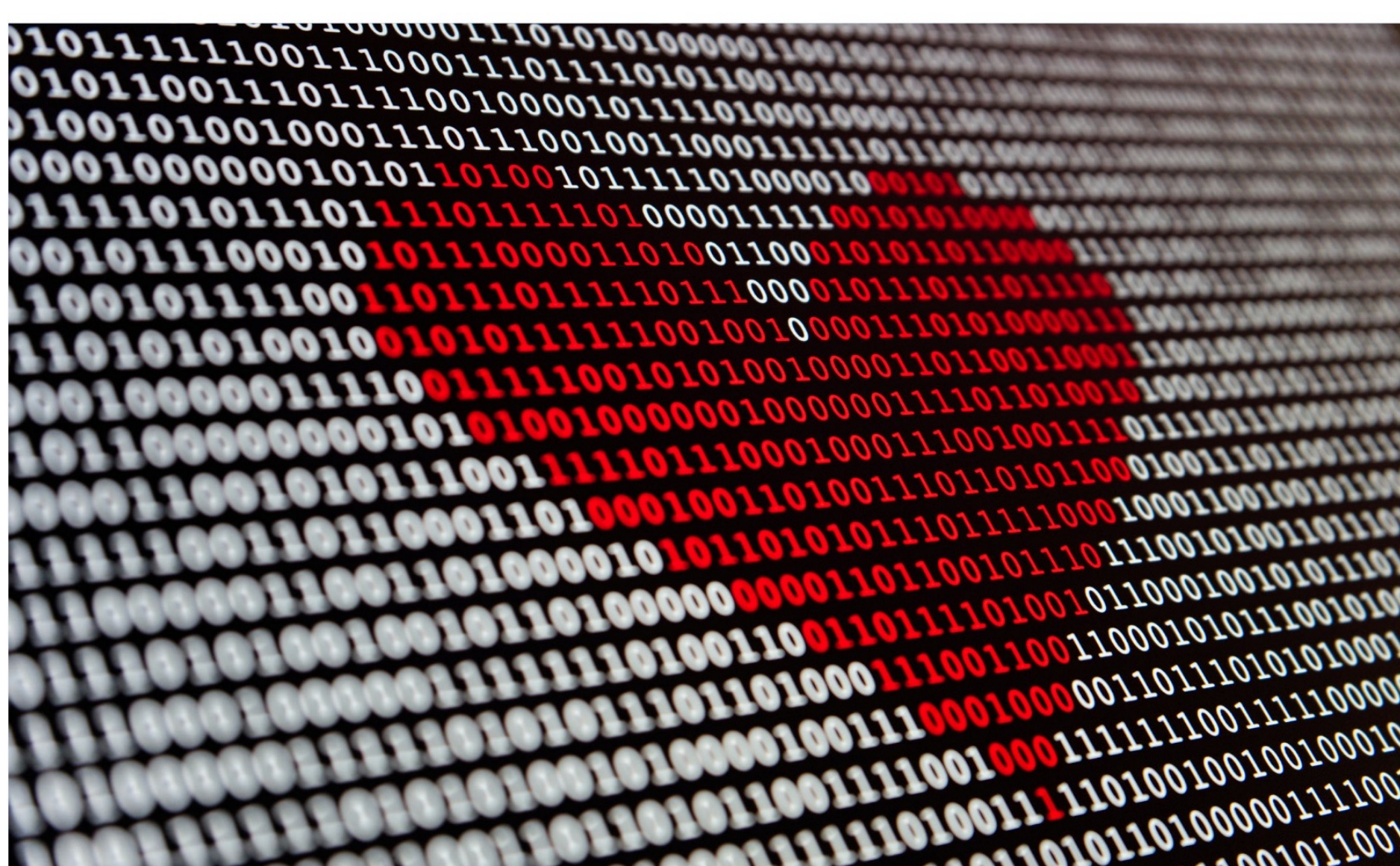
Focus areas

This project focuses on 5 areas of practice:

1. **Telechaplancy** (inpatient and outpatient)
2. **Documentation of spiritual care** in electronic health records (EHRs)
3. **Chaplancy training** for digital delivery of spiritual care.
4. **Patient practices** (e.g. smartphone applications for spiritual self care; virtual reality)
5. **Quality control** (e.g. patient-reported outcome measures)

Methodological Approach

We work with ethnographic and survey-based methods, interdisciplinary collaborations (e.g. computational linguistics), and digital media productions (web, video).



Spiritual Care for the 21st Century

An International Conference on the Theory and Practice of Telechaplancy.

October 19-20, 2022, 10 - 2 pm (EST)

Telechaplancy poses unique challenges and opportunities that require new skills to master. However, there are few resources for chaplains to learn and improve their work. This conference will bring together over 20 healthcare chaplains, spiritual care providers, and managers at leading healthcare institutions to share their experience with telechaplancy. It will give an overview on current developments, provide an opportunity to acquire and improve practical telechaplancy competencies, and exchange and network with telechaplains in Europe and North America.

For details see the conference programme.

Inquiries: fabian.winiger@uzh.ch and psprk@uab.edu

Registration:
<https://bit.ly/3PAGL1B>
Attendance is free of charge.



Fig.2: First international conference on telechaplancy



Fig.1: James Austin, Telechaplain at the U.S.-based Mercy Virtual

Main Findings

For Europe

1. In Europe, despite experiences made during the Covid-19 pandemic, the digitalization of professional spiritual care encounters **resistance** among chaplains.
2. However, as shown by the pioneering initiatives studied in this project, progress is being made in some areas, with the **trend towards outpatient care** emerging as an important driver.
3. A main limiting factor is the slow development of **digital healthcare** in Europe.

For North America

1. In North America and particularly the U.S., digital spiritual care is **developing rapidly under the term “telechaplancy”**.
2. Several of the largest U.S. healthcare systems are adopting **hybrid and digital-first care models**, fundamentally changing how spiritual care is delivered
3. Rather than “dehumanising”, technology is seen by many telechaplains as helping them create **deeper, longer-term** and more **patient- and needs-focused** spiritual care.

Partners and Stakeholders

- In partnership with the **U.S.-based Transforming Chaplancy**, the leading research initiative on outcome-oriented chaplancy, we initiated an interdisciplinary **Community of Practice** to explore challenges in the field and inform research. Building on this network, which currently includes over **190 members**, the **first international conference** in the field was hosted (fig. 2). A conference was also held in Zurich to facilitate **knowledge transfer**. The CoP shares its meetings and additional resources on **telechaplancy.io** (see fig. 3).
- In 2023, we launched a working group on digital care based at the **Swiss professional association** for healthcare chaplancy.
- In cooperation with the **Digital Science-Initiative** and **MEEET-Lab**, a Masters-level course on spirituality and **VR**, and an ongoing **workshop series** for secondary school students.

Contribution to URPP Objectives

1. Examining the emergence of digital religion in the field of **healthcare chaplancy**
2. Investigating the **potentials and risks** of digital spiritual care for **patients, relatives, caregivers and stakeholders** in Europe and North America.

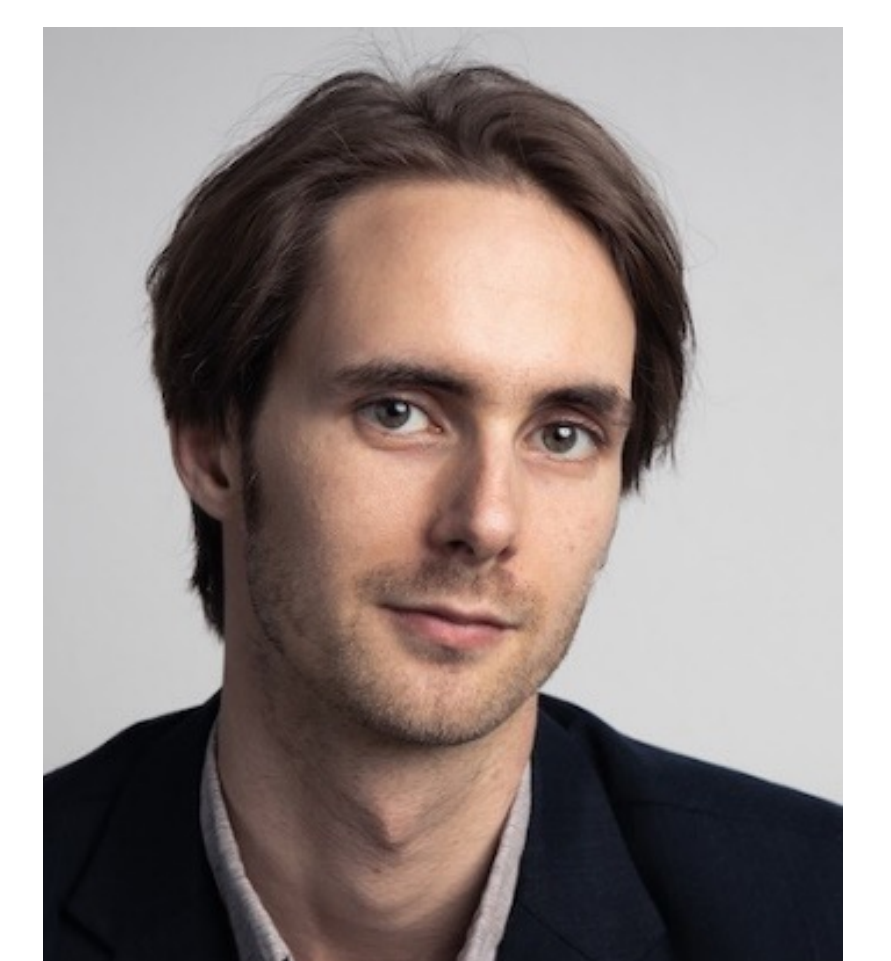


Fig.3: Web portal launched as part of phase 1, connecting scholars and practitioners in Germany and North America. It has received >11'000 visits, and is ranked #1 on Google for “telechaplancy”.

People



Prof. Dr. Simon Peng-Keller
Professorship of Spiritual Care



Dr. Fabian Winiger
Early career researcher
Professorship of Spiritual Care

Publications

Scan QR code to view:

