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# The Institute of Medicine, Education, and Spirituality at Ochsner Health (IMESO)

## Breath and Depth of IMESO at Ochsner Health

The worth and contributions of a program is best assessed in narrative form by those who experience it. Below are testimonies gathered from a wide range of Ochsner employees about the contributions that IMESO makes in the Ochsner Health System. The responses were based on one question: “What does IMESO’s presence and services add to my personal and professional workplace life and to Ochsner as a whole?” These testimonies are not abridged.

### **A Senior Nurse (CNO) Leader said....**

“IMESO has reminded me as a nurse leader that there is more to the patient than their diagnosis. I have a renewed sense of purpose in my role as a leader of nurses to ensure that the manner in which we provide care is reflective of the support and care the patient needs as a whole person greater than just their diagnosis.”

### **A Member of the Safety Team said...**

“IMESO has awakened an introspective approach, encouraging us to remember why we were drawn to a career in healthcare. It seeks to help us find the spirit and purpose that we may have lost along the way. IMESO leads us to better self-care and fulfillment.

By teaching students and residents to consider virtues as they practice medicine, IMESO gives those learners an advantage at the start of their careers. They will likely be better equipped to find balance and contentment in their stressful lives.

For me, the fact that IMESO exists shows that we value the well-being of our people. I am a wholehearted supporter.”

### **An Attorney said...**

“IMESO is a reminder that we are spiritual creatures learning to live in a physical world; that we can integrate our faith into our work and remain true to our deepest values.”

### **A Staff Nurse said.....**

“As a nurse it was so refreshing to see the virtues highlighted by IMESO and so intricately engrained into the Nurse Residency Program. My preparation and deliverance of one of the virtue lectures (transcendence) with fellow co-worker was very enriching. It allowed us to reflect on our combined 28 years as NICU nurses and to share some more moving experiences with the residents. The active participation during the session and the positive feedback following confirms they were listening and recognized a need for an introspective glance into their

individual purpose and mission as a nurse. I believe instilling the concept of “nursing with virtues” to newer nurses is very important. We as nurses need to fully understand the power and privilege, we possess every day in making a positive difference in the lives of others.”

**An Executive Vice President said....**

“It has been our privilege to teach and to mentor future doctors. We have taught them the principles of biomedical and clinical sciences- we have given them the opportunity to pursue research – we have taught them the principles of safety - we have also attempted to strengthen their inherent values and virtues through something special called IMESO. Through IMESO virtue and value educational programs, they have been reminded of the human spirit – theirs and their patients’. Our goal with this medical school has been to take bright young people who want to make a difference, and to give them the chance to hone their humanism through exposure to different cultures and systems across the world and to graduate owning, cherishing, promulgating, and believing in in those values that will ensure their sustainability as empathetic and caring physicians. I challenge the medical students to maintain and reinforce their values and virtues, especially including humility, respect, honesty, compassion, and generosity.”

**A Senior Administrative (CEO) Leader said....**

“We have worked hard to infuse the thoughts and concepts of IMESO at our hospital. This has helped ensure that the board and leadership team are in alignment in supporting the programs and services that most support the patient and our employees.”

**A Chief Operating Officer said...**

“IMESO has taught me about spirituality and what it means to be a spiritual leader and how to develop as a leader by challenging myself to develop and grow spiritually. I would like to think that this has improved my effectiveness as a leader.”

“For me, IMESO represents one of the most significant, insightful advances that Ochsner has made in its recent history. Healing is one of our core mission principles and at the center of all healthcare measures. Spirituality is that intangible dimension that people tap into to help themselves heal when they are sick, be it simple malaise, chronic illness, or terminal condition. Hence, the vital requisite for an entity like IMESO at all Ochsner facilities so that staff members feel comfortable with and are adept at addressing this inherent aspect of patient care.

IMESO meets an equally important need for all those who work at Ochsner, in non-clinical and clinical areas alike. I think of spirituality as an often silent, yet fundamental, human need. Ironically, my experience is that many co-workers are so hesitant to vocalize this need, self-conscious about its mere presence or unsure how to articulate it, that they become secretive about it. Yet, behind closed doors – and when it feels safe to be vulnerable – I find colleagues are very expressive, appreciative, and longing to share more.

I believe that IMESO not only gives people permission to openly explore their innate spiritual needs, but is also a concrete venue to define spirituality for themselves (in whatever terminology they prefer) and gain clarity in how that spirituality translates into their work life as a member of an organization dedicated to healing.”

#### **A Project Manager said...**

“Simply put, IMESO represents an untapped and key tool for Ochsner to meet its chief goals including patient loyalty, employee/leader/physician engagement, clinical outcomes and yes, financial metrics.”

#### **A Physician Hospitalist said...**

“IMESO helps to integrate quality, cost-effective, and patient-centered care into compassionate, holistic care through its presence and services. It has improved organizational culture by recognizing and enhancing spirituality in the workplace and helped employees to endure the challenging and rapid changes in healthcare

delivery of our times. IMESO's presence has improved my workplace life by acknowledging the importance of holistic care."

### **A Senior Physician said...**

"IMESO has prompted me to deepen my own sense of spirituality and help to extend the same reflective and cognitive experience to my colleagues. It is THE reason I am here at Ochsner enjoying my daily practice.

It is quite apparent to me that spirituality is not the same as religion; neither is it the same as an organization's values. They complement each other. The photo of our 5 founders is a powerful example of "why" we should hold fast as we continue to grow our corporate practice, and we must. IMESO emphasizes that developing our own spirituality; deliberately practicing the virtues of courage, justice, temperance, transcendence, and wisdom engages the world around us we serve our fellow man."

### **An Internal Medicine Physician said...**

"IMESO helps to remind me what is really important in helping to deliver healthcare to patients in need of it. It is not for RVU's, production, surveys, department budgets or Epic. It is to serve those in need and to do that while keeping aligned with my spiritual master. It also reminds me that we, as humans, do not know what truly goes on inside of the human body and we never will. Stay humble and serve the needs of others. If we all strive to do that, the RVUs, etc. will all take care of themselves."

### **A Senior Vice President of Services said...**

"Finding meaningful purpose in one's faith, work, and life is the challenge that gets us up in the morning."

### **An Operations Vice President said....**

“IMESO has refocused us on the need to take care of not only the physical ailments of our patients but also the healing of mind and spirit. IMESO also does a great job keeping us focused on the minds and spirits of our caregivers who serve the needs of the Gulf Coast.” those who are passionate about improving care.”

### **A Nursing Administrator said...**

“IMESO has supported and enhanced my personal journey to live a life of gratitude and truly live every day as if it is the best day ever. This, in turn, has become my foundation for servant leadership to help fellow nurses connect to their passion and calling. In addition, IMESO has been an integral part of our Nursing Residency Program and has expanded the minds of new nurses who are on a journey to professionally develop and commit to a vocation of nursing others.”

### **An Executive Officer said...**

“IMESO has put meaning and purpose in what we do as a compassionate, healing health system. In my experience, IMESO has served as the conscience and soul of Ochsner Health System. IMESO helps to answer the question we all ask at times, “Why do I do this for a living?”

### **A Specialist in Medicine said....**

“Spirituality is the competency acquired and matured throughout a medical education process which forms the foundation for compassionate and caring connections made between the healthcare provider and the patient. Without it, no real healing of heart, mind, or soul can occur. IMESO reminds us of this important spirit necessary to the practice of medicine.”

### **A Senior Physician said...**

“IMESO has given me the opportunity to improve my professional life since I am able to reflect of what I do. Reflection is defined “as serious thought or consideration”. Thus, having IMESO reminding me that our patients are the focus of our daily activities (through reflection) and how much do we help them it has allowed refocusing my mind to patient care and therefore a better doctor. At the end it has given me more professional satisfaction.”

### **A Social Worker said...**

“IMESO reminds us that spirituality is the very air that we breathe...it is what gives us life. To neglect that aspect of our health and wholeness is to neglect a potentially powerful force in our healing.”

### **A Physician Administrator said...**

“I have heard several stories on the positive impact of IMESO in our organization. I interview physician candidates. In reviewing the background of these candidates, I have identified several individuals who have training/educational experience/interest in theology or evidence of involvement with spirituality in their medical training. In each of these cases, I describe IMESO as an example of Ochsner’s unique dedication to patient care at all levels.

The response from these candidates is always extremely positive, and they are most impressed with our innovation in this program. I have introduced several of these physicians to IMESO, and I understand they are excited to participate.”

### **A Researcher said....**

“Values and virtues are essential for a satisfying and meaningful personal existence. These values include a sense of humanity, a commitment to courageous behavior, an ongoing consideration of justice, a continuous desire to expand knowledge, a respect for wisdom, the practice of personal and professional prudence, and the understanding and perception of spirituality. IMESO reminds all at Ochsner Health System of these important aspects in healthcare.”

### **A Physician said...**

The psychosocial work environment has worsened as demands on physicians have increased at the same time as autonomy and satisfaction with the profession of medicine have decreased. Studies have shown that up to 46% of practicing physicians report at least one symptom of burnout. And with that sobering statistic in mind, I was introduced to IMESO. IMESO inspired the concept of teaching virtues to our medical students to provide them a scaffolding to build resilience upon as they face the complexities and stresses of the practice of medicine.

### **A Facilities Employee said...**

“Compared to most healthcare organizations, I think most of our employees truly believe Ochsner serves a higher purpose of caring for the needy. Personally, I take pride in knowing that there is something special we do every day and I have an appreciation to be given the opportunity to make a difference in so many individual’s lives. From inception Ochsner has focused on medical and educational issues and does this quite well, evidenced by the many accomplishments and recognition of quality patient care over the years. These accomplishments and our success are also evident by the many awards, testimonials from grateful patients, national and local press, etc. What I think has been missing and what I believe IMESO is trying to satisfy is the “spiritual” aspect of how we give care... the “Why” that higher purpose that gets us out of bed every day, that drives us with a “fire in the belly” to wants to get better. IMESO brings purpose to our patient care beyond cold technical medical treatment. It allows us to reflect on our behaviors; how a simple smile might make a patient’s family member going through a rough time feel a little bit better, or a touch of a hand by the nurse may give comfort to those in pain. I think there are certain people in our organization that embody this spirit and gift of making other feel better without even knowing they are doing it. For those of us who need guidance and spiritual awareness to keep us on the right track, I think a program like IMESO will help make us a better organization.”



### **An Internal Medicine Physician said...**

“An organization can foster workplace connectivity in many ways. The Institute of Medicine and Spirituality at Ochsner (IMESO) is one of the structures in this institution that promotes mental healing and spiritual growth of its providers. A hospital system, whose mission is to take care of human lives in times of social change, illness, epidemics, and disasters, needs to have a psychologically safe place within its core structure where this growth is nurtured. Times change, values change, personnel and systems change, but the need for excellent healthcare never leaves us. Uncertainty and workplace stress take their toll on everyone. A large hospital system such as ours needs a permanent structure that can help the provider and the administrator build the internal skills desired for great patient care and for personal growth. IMESO should be expanded in scope, breadth, and depth to encourage education, development of our common values and connectivity. Without acknowledging the interconnectedness amongst providers and administrators, meaning and purpose diminishes, and loyalties fade away.

### **A Director in Women’s Health said...**

“Leaders at Ochsner have many things to be concerned about daily. Going through the virtues’ education course gives leaders time out of your day to focus on you and your leadership style. Learning about the virtues and examining your strengths and weaknesses in each of them helps leaders have introspection and helps you too see what you should be focused on. IMESO is a huge asset to Ochsner. IMESO helps leaders excel by furthering understanding themselves and what they stand for so they can lead with excellence.”

### **A Financial Administrator said...**

“My involvement with IMESO is something I consider extraordinarily valuable to my growth not only as an Ochsner employee but on a personal and professional level. IMESO has helped find a way to find meaning in how we are working as a team to help people and our community. It gives me a sense of peace to discuss with others what is so great about being in healthcare and at Ochsner. As a

member of administration, it can be difficult to relate to what it is like for physicians and care givers daily. IMESO gives me the platform to reflect on what drives me and my colleagues and why I choose every day to be a part of Ochsner.”

#### **A Physician Chairperson said...**

“In the fall of 2013 our departmental retreat invited IMESO to facilitate a learning discussion regarding virtues in the daily practice of patient care. This was indicated because of declining engagement scores by our lay staff, and to a lesser degree, by our providers. This exercise helped us to gain a much-needed deeper appreciation for the talents that every member of our clinical team provided on a day-to-day basis. Suddenly, everyone better recognized what our phone people and front office staff really do daily to facilitate patient throughput.

The doctors better understood the roles of our middle-level providers and the members of our allied healthcare team. A recent pulse survey revealed that the bar has been moved considerably...as from 30% to over 80% engagement across the entire departmental team.”

#### **A Translational Researcher said...**

“I believe IMESO will improve employee commitment and talent retention. It will also enable employees to better manage work pressure and improve the work efficiency of Ochsner as a whole. With IMESO, Ochsner will certainly become a better workplace.”

#### **A Senior Nurse said...**

“I have been taking care of patients and their wounds for my entire nursing career. Many years ago, I realized that to properly care for the patient, it was important not to just take care of the hole in the patient, but to take care of the whole patient. The mission and vision of IMESO exemplify this. The mind-body-spirit connection is strong and cannot be denied. When we heal, inspire, and transform through the integration of medicine, education, and spirituality we become the beneficiaries of reciprocal healing between patient and caregiver. Being a part of IMESO has helped me reconnect more deeply with my inner self

which in turn helps me to connect more effectively with my patients. It is a win-win situation for all.”

#### **A Security Officer said...**

“IMESO has been a true inspiration for our team and given us an idea of what our focus should be; not only to serve, heal, lead, educate and innovate but to develop our staff morally, ethically and even spiritually so they may learn how to serve and understand others and, ultimately, serve and understand themselves.”

#### **A Senior Nurse said...**

“IMESO brings the heart and soul back to Ochsner. Those of us fortunate enough to work at Ochsner before the system expansion experienced the founding fathers’ mission to provide quality care with compassion. We knew we were a part of an integrated team whose purpose was not only to optimize patient outcomes, but to lead healthcare into the future. As our system expanded, we found ourselves working alongside fellow professionals that did not feel the same sense of belonging to Ochsner that we experienced. IMESO has re-awakened the meaning and value of work life here at Ochsner that promises to invigorate the heart and soul of our team.”

#### **A Safety Officer said...**

“I believe IMESO ignites a spark within individuals employed at Ochsner. IMESO provides a foundation for leadership to help develop departmental virtues which can then be applied on a more practical basis, to develop better self-awareness within one’s respective work environment. It also allows leaders to gauge overall satisfaction levels from their staff in a more intimate and personal arena. IMESO provides education about virtues and how we can as a health system provide the best overall experience for our patients and guests by becoming our best selves at work with a more integrated ‘hands on’ approach.”

#### **An Ochsner Medical Student said...**

“IMESO provides a guiding light in this tumultuous and rapidly changing healthcare environment. As systems demand more productivity and value,

IMESO reminds us that humanism and virtue remain the most important aspects of high-quality healthcare provision.”

#### **A Nursing Professional said...**

“When I considered leaving the hospital where I worked for fourteen years, I was looking for a healthcare system where connection matters. When I read about IMESO online before joining Ochsner, it was a big draw for me to join this team. Learning about the virtues and helping share the message of these with nurses, PCTs and others has been one of my greatest joys and satisfiers since I've worked here. Unless people feel the connection to the people they serve and understand its value in their work, they will not be fully serving the patient's needs. Serving with spirit, in my belief underpins excellent outcomes.”

#### **A Finance Administrator said...**

“When I decided to leave my previous profession over two years ago, I was in search of an opportunity to better contribute to my community using my talents and time. I chose the Finance Fellowship here at Ochsner after getting to know its leaders and preceptors and being truly moved by their commitment to our employees, patients, and their families. IMESO allows me to stay tied to my purpose at this organization and initial reason for joining the health system. I strongly believe that the missing link between Ochsner’s efforts, employee satisfaction, and outstanding quality lies in the idea of meaningful work and connecting daily activities with our spiritual calling as people. I am thrilled to see that the new administrative fellows are learning about IMESO and getting involved early in their careers here. The skills they learn and connections they make through IMESO will help them spread the mission in all of their interactions at Ochsner.”

#### **A Social Work Administrator said...**

“The purpose and goals of IMESO have the potential to propel OHS into an even more forward-thinking, holistic framework which will improve lives of both patients and staff. As a professional and clinical social worker, I see opportunities all around me each day for people to incorporate compassionate care spiritual

care (for self and for others), which I truly believe will enhance everyone's experience within our health system. IMESO has a chance to directly impact patient and caregiver satisfaction as well as employee satisfaction, retention and engagement. My hope is that this committee has a voice which is able to be effectively heard, and initiatives which will effectively be implemented within this great organization to make it even more innovative for the future of everyone involved.”

