

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Symposium at Laurier focuses on impact of religion on public health *Groundbreaking Canadian researcher to share his findings on relatively new area of study*

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WATERLOO — Can spirituality keep you healthy? At least one researcher believes nearly one-fifth of all deaths in Canada are "potentially attributable" to low levels of spirituality.

Chandrakant Shah, a leader in public health research, will share his findings at a symposium on religion and public health at Wilfrid Laurier University on Tuesday, October 10.

Hosted by the department of religion and culture at Laurier, the symposium will highlight key issues in the relatively new area of religion and public health for members of the academic and professional communities. The area is so new that Shah's is the first Canadian study to assume spiritual people lead healthier lives.

"The academic and professional communities have gathered a lot of valuable knowledge about religion and health — especially Dr. Shah who is a groundbreaker in this area," says Carol Duncan, one of the symposium's organizers. "We've invited him in the hopes that his research will spark interest and dialogue on the benefits of linking health issues and religion."

Shah's research offers a counterargument to conventional North American approaches to health, which separate the physical from the spiritual. His study claims that if an extra six per cent of Canadians worshipped regularly, the number of deaths attributable to low spirituality would drop from 43,000 to 38,000 per year.

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Shah is professor and director of development and education in the University of Toronto's department of public health services. A pioneer and leader in the development of medical education in public health in Canada, Shah has also conducted innovative research in areas such as aboriginal health.

This event will be held in the Grad House on Bricker Street from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. It is open to academics and professionals in related fields; members of the media are also welcome to attend.