

Michael Molls

## Words of welcome to the book “Existential Elucidation”

As a clinical (radiation) oncologist, I devoted my professional life to treating patients suffering from breast, prostate, colon, and lung cancers as well as other malignant diseases. Many patients could be cured; however, many others gradually developed a metastatic terminal disease. According to current data from international tumour registries, the disease-related mortality rate among adult cancer patients in Germany and other modern techno-societies is around 45%.

In palliative care, I – together with my colleagues – was not only confronted with the question of how to best alleviate pain or other distressing symptoms. There was also the challenge of helping to bring peace to the souls of our patients, who sensed and knew that the end of their lives was approaching. In these situations, through direct personal contact with individual patients and their families, I learned very specifically that spirituality also plays a role in clinical medicine.

In 1921, Karl Jaspers, who had studied medicine and worked in the field of psychiatry for a time, became professor of philosophy at the University of Heidelberg. His philosophy is relevant to Spiritual Care, particularly his concepts of “Grenzsituationen” (boundary situations) and transcendence, which represent suffering as a turning point for people to find new meaning and purpose, and connect them to something greater than themselves, even in times of crisis. Spirituality in the philosophical sense of Jaspers opens up a space for patients to explore existential questions, thereby promoting self-help and mutual understanding in the context of healthcare.

As director of the TUM Institute for Advanced Study I am very grateful to our alumnus Fellow and Philosopher in Residence Rico Gutschmidt and to his host at our TUM university hospital Klinikum rechts der Isar, Eckhard Frick, for editing the Book “Existential Elucidation.” The book discusses in depth Karl Jaspers’ philosophy of boundary situations. Moreover, it addresses perspectives on application as well as thoughts for interdisciplinary research. All these aspects are of great importance to nurses, psychologists, and physicians who work as clinicians or/and scientists.

I am convinced that the book will provide valuable and useful information for all those who devote their work, their energy, and their competent professionalism to sick people who are trying to find ways to cope with their oppressive diseases, their inner turmoil, and their suffering. It is my sincere hope that the

book will serve as a gateway to an area of clinical medicine and psychology that deserves the utmost attention, namely the field of Spiritual Care.