



An integrative literature review: Bereavement support interventions for newly widowed older women experiencing uncomplicated grief

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Introduction

1. **Older adults, a large portion of whom are widowed women, comprise the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population today** (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).
2. **Although most recover from grief and its associated symptoms, a substantial minority of spousally bereaved older adults struggle with adaptation to loss and experience complicated grief** (Monk, et al., 2008; Worden, 2009)
3. **For these individuals, bereavement support interventions can have a preventive effect, reducing problems such as depression and decreased functional independence** (Onrust, Smit, Willemse, Bout, & Cuijpers (2008).

Significance of Problem

Despite the availability of multiple bereavement support interventions, consensus is lacking regarding the need for such interventions, as well as their efficacy.

(Genevro, Marshall, & The Center for the Advancement of Health, 2004)

Aims

1. Summarize and evaluate bereavement support interventions with newly widowed older women experiencing uncomplicated grief
2. Identify any questions raised by the research
3. Suggest approaches for future research
4. Determine whether any evidence based practice recommendations can be made

Framework

Whittenmore and Knafl's (2005) five stage framework for conducting research reviews

1. Problem Formulation
2. Literature Search
3. Data Evaluation
4. Data Analysis
5. Presentation

(based on Coopers (1998) framework)

Bereavement Support Interventions

(most common in studies)

- Self help groups
- On line virtual reality interactive support group
- dan Jeon (breathing and exercise technique)
- Home visiting service (by trained peer)
- Verbalization of thoughts and feelings re loss

Outcome Variables

(most common in studies)

- Grief
- Hopelessness
- Affect
- Loneliness
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Sleep Quality
- Immune Response

Findings

Statistically significant results demonstrated in 3 studies

1. The effects of a self-help group and dan Jeon (intervention group) versus no intervention (control group) on depression and life satisfaction yielded a statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) reduction in depression and increase in satisfaction in the intervention versus control group (Yoo & Kang, 2006).
2. The effects of a self-help group and dan Jeon (intervention group) versus no intervention (control group) on grief, stress, and the immune response yielded a statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) decrease in grief level and reduction in stress symptoms in the intervention group as compared to the control group (Kang & Yoo, 2007).
3. The effect of a support group on loneliness, affect, and perceived support (measured utilizing pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest questionnaires) yielded a statistically significant increase in support satisfaction and positive affect, and decrease in support needs (Stewart, Craig, MacPherson, & Alexander, 2011).

Recommendations for Future Research

- Evaluation of bereavement support outcomes over time.
- Replication studies comparing bereavement support outcomes in participants who seek out support versus those recruited to receive support.
- Evaluation of bereavement support outcomes in same gender support groups versus mixed gender support groups.

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