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Introducing bereavement

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Introducing *Bereavement*: journal of grief and responses to death

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In academic circles, bereavement is often considered a niche area of study. Yet death is universal and everyone's business. Indeed, as the world continues to navigate the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have all been confronted with the reality of death, dying and bereavement. In such a context, a space for critical and informed research, discussion and debate on grief and bereavement is more vital than ever. *Bereavement: journal of grief and responses to death* aims to provide this space, supporting the ever-growing community of researchers, practitioners, policymakers, volunteers and people with lived experience involved in improving understanding of grief and bereavement and enhancing the quality of support provided to bereaved people.

Bereavement describes the state we experience in the aftermath of the death of someone close. Grief is a response to death, albeit a response that is multifaceted and changes over time. As practitioners, academics and people with lived experience working within the broad field of bereavement support, we know that responses to death are varied and diverse. The reference in the subtitle of this journal to 'responses to death' aims to draw attention to the range of ways people experience the aftermath of death. As a journal, we want to further understandings of all the different ways in which people experience death and bereavement, and in turn improve how support and care is provided.

The journal continues the work of its predecessor *Bereavement Care* and builds on this significant foundation by seeking to tackle and address some of the new challenges and opportunities we currently face in the field of bereavement practice, policy and research. *Bereavement Care* was founded in 1982 by Cruse with the aim of 'providing all the people who work to help the bereaved with a forum for discussion and further education' (*Bereavement Care*, 1982). Under the editorship of Colin Murray Parkes, the journal grew into an international research journal read by bereavement professionals and volunteers, as well as academics and researchers and all those with an interest in bereavement (Kerslake, 2020). In our new iteration as *Bereavement* we continue these shared goals and remain in close partnership with Cruse Bereavement Support, who continue to publish the journal.

Along with this continuity comes change. *Bereavement* is now an online-only journal and all articles are open access. Being freely available will allow articles to be read and shared by a wide range of audiences. Publishing open access in *Bereavement* is now free for all authors and we hope that this will reduce the barriers for those without recourse to the substantial funds often required to publish and disseminate their work. This increased flexibility will also allow us to publish articles online soon after they have been accepted and help authors to ensure their research outputs have the potential to inform contemporary debates in policy and practice.

We have refreshed the types of submission we feature in the journal. Original articles and literature reviews will be published alongside

‘Viewpoint’ articles where we invite authors to write short pieces drawing on their professional and/or personal experience on key topics in bereavement research, policy or practice. As the journal develops, we plan to include ‘In conversation’ pieces featuring interviews with service providers, academics, policymakers and other stakeholders engaging in innovative work in the field. We will introduce themed sections where guest editors will be welcomed to edit a series of articles on a theme related to bereavement research. Rapid responses will enable readers to respond and comment on published articles.

Since its inception, the journal has maintained an important emphasis on the theory and practice of bereavement support. *Bereavement* continues to act as a bridge between research and practice and as part of this initiative we encourage authors to include in their submissions several key implications for practice, theory or policy to aid others in making use of the research in their own work.

These changes reflect our desire to encourage dialogue and debate around the key issues in the bereavement field. In doing so, we seek to open up and engage in conversations about taken-for-granted assumptions about grief and bereavement care and support. As ever, we value the perspectives of those with lived experience of bereavement and strive to include a diversity of views and perspectives in the journal.

The unique aspect of bereavement support is that it does not belong to any one sector: bereavement counsellors and support workers, funeral directors and celebrants, chaplains, palliative care specialists, nurses, doctors, social workers, care home managers, therapists and general practitioners are only some of the professional roles whose work involves supporting bereaved people. Bereavement support spans services and organisations in acute and primary healthcare, social care, community, voluntary and charity sectors. Grief and bereavement has been the concern of a wide range of academic disciplines incorporating clinical and theoretical perspectives – including psychology, social sciences, arts and humanities, and psychiatry – and bereavement studies is relevant to a range of research areas including ageing studies, family studies, lifecourse approaches and palliative care to

name only a few. *Bereavement* continues to embrace this multidisciplinary community and encourage interdisciplinary enquiry drawing on a range of methods, approaches and perspectives.

In the UK and elsewhere bereavement is now on the political agenda, in part a result of the impact of the pandemic. It is thus especially timely to relaunch this journal providing a platform and outlet for evidence based research. Despite an extensive evidence base on bereavement, many questions remain. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of bereavement services and interventions; to understand how to better serve seldom-heard groups and communities and reduce inequalities in access and how to resolve the variations people experience in the delivery and provision of support. We invite submissions that tackle these and other key issues.

As the journal strives to support the global community of bereavement researchers and practitioners, we hope to provide a welcoming space for early career researchers as well as academics from the global south to publish their work. We remain indebted to the peer reviewers who volunteer their time to provide the constructive feedback essential to the ongoing work of the journal. As incoming Editor-in-Chief, I am greatly thankful for the support of a dedicated editorial board, managing editor and the support of Cruse as we work together in developing the future of the journal.

It is in this collective spirit that I would like to close by reiterating the call poignantly put forward by editorial board member Alison Penny in the last issue of *Bereavement Care* (Penny, 2020) and invite you to continue to write for us, read and engage with the journal, now that bereavement scholarship is more important than ever.

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