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Bereavement Care - Current and needed evidence

For every death, it is estimated that 4 to 10 people will be significantly grief stricken, with many more experiencing some mourning or other emotional reactions. Over the years, a wide range of bereavement care services have come to exist in Canada and most other countries. This range of services is highly relevant, as the care or support needs of bereaved people can differ considerably. For instance, the bereavement care needs of a young child who has lost a parent or sibling will differ from those of a teen or young adult who similarly has lost a parent or sibling. Moreover, the bereavement care needs of older women or men who suffer the loss of a long-time beloved spouse will differ from the bereavement care needs of young women and men who have lost a child through stillbirth or through cancer, an accident, or suicide. Moreover, some people are more able to manage their grief as they have strong personal or other resources, helpful support from family and friends, and past experiences of recovering from grief. Only a small proportion of mourning people seek out or use bereavement support services; often those at risk of or who are already experiencing complicated or chronic grief. What is not clearly evident is which bereavement care services are more effective than others for helping people

who are seriously grieving. No government requirements appear to exist to mandate bereavement service evaluations or to regulate how bereavement programs are designed or formatted. To that end, a series of studies are being conducted by the lead author to begin to understand bereavement and bereavement support. Existing evidence-based practice and research needs in relation to bereavement care will be the focus of this presentation.

Speaker Biography

Donna M Wilson is a Professor in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta, with appointments in the Faculty of Medicine and University of Limerick. She has worked as a staff nurse, nursing supervisor, senior hospital administrator, media commentator, educator, researcher, and professor in Alberta, British Columbia, New Zealand, Texas and Ireland. Her research program focuses on health services and health policy; primarily in relation to aging, ageism and end-of-life care. Her work is oriented to myth busting, to ensure effective and accessible healthcare services for older and younger people. Her investigations often involve population data and mixed-methods research. She has over 300 articles, books, book chapters, and other peer-reviewed communications in print. She is frequently and widely consulted for expert commentary on aging, end-of-life care, health policy, healthcare services and health system trends and issues.

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