

Title: Grief counselling after losing a spouse/partner: An Action Research Project

Type of presentation: Oral

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Keywords: older people, grief counselling, health care, action research, practice development

Abstract:

The objective of this three-year implementation project is to develop preventive intervention for community-dwelling elderly survivors after loss of spouse/partner. The project is still ongoing.

Losing a spouse/partner can be a devastating experience that many of us will have to face. The background for implementing this study is that there is a great deal of knowledge about health related, social and economic factors that may influence the newly bereaved in handling of losses. Until now these factors are often not included in the interventions targeting this population. In addition, several studies show that there is a need for trained personnel and well-described programs to achieve effective intervention.

Older vulnerable people over 65 years living in Vejle Municipality are offered prevention counselling in order to maintain their health, well-being and functional ability so that they can live an independent and meaningful life as long as possible. The preventive counselling to elderly survivors focuses on the sorrowful changes after a loss that could result in poor physical health, depression, and loneliness.

The theoretical framework of the research project is based on action research, which through practice experience seeks to develop the intervention. The action research process consists of a cyclical process where each cycle has four steps: plan, act, observe and reflect. Themes in focus are reorganizing and development of the intervention including introduction of an action plan, a communication plan and a competency development plan. Data is collected through a range of methods, including in-depth interviews, questionnaires, participant observation and prospective observations to generate data about the experience with the grief counselling and how this affect the practice of the health care providers and the daily living of older people who have lost a spouse/partner.

So far the study has showed that health care professionals need an appropriate form of support through specialized training and supervision to celebrate their professional knowledge about grief counselling, and to generate new knowledge. To give the health care professionals the opportunity to develop personal and professional skills in grief counselling it is essential that the practice is organized with continuous team meetings with expert supervision.

Key references

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