

Grieving advice to improve support services

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Bereaved people also need to determine for themselves how long to grieve and when to take the next step to move on. Credit: iStock

When it comes to the death of a loved one, who better to give you advice than someone who has been in a similar situation?

A team of West Australian scientists recognised the importance of this advice, which resulted in them surveying more than 250 grieving Australians about advice they have for people in similar situations.

The research is designed to improve Australia's [palliative care services](#) and the [support](#) offered to grieving people.

The bereaved participants suggest people speak to the person in palliative care as much as possible before their passing.

Any support services should include help with funeral and financial arrangements prior to that person's passing as well as personalised palliative care services at the end of the individual's life, according to the survey participants.

They also suggest that once the individual has passed on the people who are grieving need to seek and accept support from others, especially people in their natural support networks such as family and friends.

Bereaved people also need to determine for themselves how long to grieve and when to take the next step to move on.

The surveys were distributed to four Australian funeral companies, including two from West Australia.

"We posted 2003 questionnaire packs to people in WA," Curtin University researcher Lauren Breen says.

"[Of those sent out] 452 returned and 147 were from people whose deceased family member had used [palliative care](#)."

The findings have already been presented at several professional conferences including Palliative Care Australia.

Suggestions used for future bereavement care and support

"The detailed information [the participants] provided could be used to

develop resources such as brochures," Dr Breen says.

"Or it could also be used by staff members who do not have training in bereavement care and the wider community, so that we can all learn to support bereaved people a bit better.

"There are a lot of information resources, such as brochures and websites, about grief.

"Surprisingly, many of these were developed without any input from bereavement people."

Dr Breen says bereavement care is underdeveloped in Australia and overseas, and services don't always know the best way to help bereaved families cope with their loss.

"In general, bereaved people are often offered limited support or their offered services irrespective of their need for those services," she says.

"What we are trying to do is promote the effectiveness of supports by trying to match services offered with need."

More information: Building Community Capacity in Bereavement Support: Lessons Learnt From Bereaved Caregivers. Am J Hosp Palliat Care. 2015 Nov 12. pii: 1049909115615568. [Epub ahead of print]. www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26566928

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