VIDEO

DYING, DEATH AND BEREAVEMENT

The Conference Unit, St George's Medical School. *Brighton, UK: Mole Conferences, 1996. £25 + £3.00 p&p*

The two, one-hour videos in this pack are recordings of presentations given at a conference and copies of both papers are included.

The first video, 'A model for coping with grief and its practical applications for the bereavement counsellor', given by Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut of the University of Utrecht, covers much of the same ground as their article which appeared in the last issue of *Bereavement Care*[*] and needs no review here. The tape also includes a session with Henk Schut inviting questions and discussion from the audience after the talk.

The second video, 'Dying, death and grieving in a multi-cultural society', contains an abundance of information concerning the beliefs, rituals and rites of passage for Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. The address was given by Hansa Patel-Kawal of the Naz Project. This project was established in 1991, in Hounslow, because people from the South Asian, Turkish, Arab and Iranian communities were not able to access mainstream HIV/AIDS or sexual health services because of linguistic and cultural difficulties.

I would see this video as a good training tool for health care workers and bereavement counsellors, not solely those working in the HIV/AIDS field. There is also, perhaps, a need for a parallel video for Judaism and Christianity; it is too easy to assume that everyone is familiar with the procedures for these faiths.

As both videos are recordings of the actual conference talks, they include the overhead projector presentations. Unfortunately, these are so faint and blurred that they cannot be read and so it would be important to provide a précis when using them.

Many conference organisers now record papers given at their conferences and try to market them but, as the recording conditions are far from ideal and the speakers are addressing a live audience with no opportunity for editing or retakes, the results seldom make good listening or a satisfactory production.

Richard Adfield
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[*]Culture and grief. *Bereavement Care* 1998; **17**(1): 7-10.

ABSTRACTS

Perinatal bereavement in its cultural context

Hébert MP. *Death Studies* 1988; **22**(1): 61-78

The author of this interesting article on perinatal loss is an obstetric social worker who is involved with a highly diversified ethnic community in Canada. She describes how the loss, whether *in utero* or soon after birth, can be helped among Western communities by seeing or holding the baby, or by collecting mementoes such as a piece of clothing or a snip of hair. In the Muslim community, however, different conditions prevail, and the author illustrates this by describing the parental and familial reactions to the death of a 22-week-old foetus in a Muslim family where the father had lived in Canada for seven years whereas the mother, who only spoke Arabic, was a recent arrival. It was difficult for the nurses involved to appreciate the fundamental differences between Western and Muslim attitudes to death, and much work by everyone concerned, particularly the social worker, was needed before compromises acceptable to both parties could be agreed. The author believes that insensitivity to cultural differences gives rise to misinterpretations, conflict and inappropriate interventions, and stresses that it is important for everyone involved in these situations to be familiar with the ethnically sensitive and appropriate clinical practices and mores.

New directions in bereavement research: exploration of gender differences.

Stroebe M S. *Palliative Medicine* 1998; **12**(1): 5-12

Psychological research into bereavement has moved from a concern to establish the range and severity of mental and physical health consequences, to the examination of factors that make people especially vulnerable and, most recently, to an investigation of ways of coping with loss that may influence recovery and adjustment. This trend is illustrated here by exploring gender differences in reactions to the death of a spouse. Both males amd females are vulnerable to health problems on becoming bereaved, but research has shown that widowers suffer more, in this respect, than widows. A new framework that has been developed to help understanding of such processes in coping with loss is outlined.

Psychological development during four years of bereavement: a longitudinal case study

Balk D E, Vesta L C. *Death Studies* 1998; **22**(1): 23-41

Bereavement in the lives of college students is more common than many people realise, and it is made harder to bear because these students rarely find anyone in the university willing to recognise and discuss the significance of bereavement in their lives. This study follows the progress over four years of a student whose much-loved father had died, and who kept a journal throughout this period in which she recorded her changing feelings and described how she coped with her grief. She believes that the bereavement left an indelible mark and shaped her development and character.

Gender differences among parents who experience the death of an infant weighing less than 500 grams at birth

Kavanaugh K. *Omega* 1997; **35**(3): 281-96

There has, says the author of this article, been no examination of gender differences between parents who experience the death of a live-born infant weighing less than 500 grams at birth. In this study he describes and analyses the reactions and methods of coping with their bereavement of a small sample of such parents (five mothers and three of their husbands). The initial reaction was extreme sadness on the part of the mother, and a great need to discuss the loss with their husbands, as well as with other people. They grieved for longer and more intensely, and it was painful for them to be around other infants. The fathers, on the other hand, felt a loss of control and especially of concern for their wives. They found it difficult to talk about the bereavement, and felt a need to be strong and a desire to return to normalcy. Both mothers and fathers, however, experienced relief in work and keeping busy.

Sibling bereavement: a concept analysis

Robinson L, Mahon M M. *Death Studies* 1997; **21**(5): 477-99.

The death of an offspring presents parents with experiences and feelings that may isolate them from some of the social relationships in which they were previously involved. In this article the authors report their findings after interviewing 31 parents. They conclude that a bereaved parent culture may offer both emotional release and support; and that what gives these parents the greatest comfort is the opportunity to share their grief and sense of isolation with other bereaved parents and with understanding friends. The authors also discuss the difference between mothers and fathers in the way they react to their bereavement, and stress the great importance to women of being able to share their grief with other mothers. BC

Sheila Hodges and John Bush

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