

# INPLASY PROTOCOL

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**Conflicts of interest:**  
None declared.

## The Effectiveness of Grief intervention in Reducing the Prolonged Grief Disorder of Bereaved Family Members: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

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**Review question / Objective:** Do Grief Interventions Reduce the level of Prolonged grief disorder in Bereaved Family Members?

**Condition being studied:** Family members with prolonged grief continue to experience severe grief reactions that impair daily functioning, difficulties in self-adjustment, isolation and estrangement from people in the surrounding environment, and having mental/psychiatric disorder for several years after the bereavement. Negative thoughts and symptoms lead to abnormal or deterioration of physical and mental health, greatly affecting the quality of life. Past studies have shown that grief interventions have no significant effect on reducing general grief, because some grief will heal naturally, which reduces group differences and causes bias. In addition, although some studies have explored interventional measures for complicated grief, the outcome indicators used in the included literature are different, and some only use scales to measure general grief levels, which are substantially different from complicated grief levels, which may lead to statistical bias, which unable to truly demonstrate the effectiveness of grief interventions for complicated grief.

Based on the above, this study uses the definition of complicated grief/prolonged grief disorder and complicated grief scales as the outcome indicators, and sets clearer criteria for literature inclusion. Using the methods of systematic literature review and meta-analysis, explore the effectiveness of grief intervention measures in reducing complicated grief, and use literature review to understand the moderating variables of complicated grief as the basis for subgroup analysis.

**INPLASY registration number:** This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 20 April 2023 and was last updated on 20 April 2023 (registration number INPLASY202340070).

### INTRODUCTION

**Review question / Objective:** Do Grief Interventions Reduce the level of

Prolonged grief disorder in Bereaved Family Members?

**Rationale:** Grief is a normal and natural dynamic emotional reaction process of

human beings in the face of loss. However, some bereaved people may continue to be emotionally impacted by strong pain and develop complicated grief/prolonged grief disorder. It is advisable to identify needs early and refer further professional assistance. This article aims to explore the effect of grief interventions on reducing the level of prolonged grief/ complicated grief through a systematic literature review, and find out the relationship between the type of grief interventions, the length of interventions and the effectiveness of reducing prolonged grief/ complicated grief through a meta-analysis.

**Condition being studied:** Family members with prolonged grief continue to experience severe grief reactions that impair daily functioning, difficulties in self-adjustment, isolation and estrangement from people in the surrounding environment, and having mental/psychiatric disorder for several years after the bereavement. Negative thoughts and symptoms lead to abnormal or deterioration of physical and mental health, greatly affecting the quality of life. Past studies have shown that grief interventions have no significant effect on reducing general grief, because some grief will heal naturally, which reduces group differences and causes bias. In addition, although some studies have explored interventional measures for complicated grief, the outcome indicators used in the included literature are different, and some only use scales to measure general grief levels, which are substantially different from complicated grief levels, which may lead to statistical bias, which unable to truly demonstrate the effectiveness of grief interventions for complicated grief.

Based on the above, this study uses the definition of complicated grief/prolonged grief disorder and complicated grief scales as the outcome indicators, and sets clearer criteria for literature inclusion. Using the methods of systematic literature review and meta-analysis, explore the effectiveness of grief intervention measures in reducing complicated grief, and use literature review to understand the moderating variables of complicated grief as the basis for subgroup analysis.

## METHODS

**Search strategy:** Databases include Medline-Ovid, Embase, CINAHL-EBSCOhost, Cochrane Library, Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection, Airiti Library.

**Terms:** bereaved family; complicated grief; prolonged grief disorder; bereavement support; grief intervention; grief therapy.

**Participant or population:** Adults bereaved with prolonged grief disorder/complicated grief.

**Intervention:** Grief intervention for adult bereaved ones who had complicated grief or prolonged grief disorder.

**Comparator:** Regular intervention.

**Study designs to be included:** RCTs.

**Eligibility criteria:** (1) Grief interventions must be carried out after the bereavement. (2) The bereavement time should be more than six months, in order to meet the definition of complicated grief in the literature. (3) Using a complicated grief measurement tool as an outcome indicator. **Exclusion criteria:** Adolescents (under 18 years of age) and pet owner.

**Information sources:** Search the following electronic databases with keywords: Medline-Ovid, Embase, CINAHL-EBSCOhost, Cochrane Library, Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection, Airiti Library. If there is an article with missing data, we will contact the author.

**Main outcome(s):** Use any kinds of inventory to measure the level of complicated grief.

**Additional outcome(s):** None.

**Data management:** (1) Create a coding sheet before search. (2) Using excel to record the data (3) The data extraction process will be independently reviewed by two researchers. If the two researchers

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disagree on the results, seek a third party to discuss and make a final judgment.

(4) If there are missing data, it will be made to contact the corresponding author. (5) The following data will be extracted. Including information about study design and methodology, participant demographics and baseline characteristics, the outcome measure tools, grief intervention context, the result.

**Quality assessment / Risk of bias analysis:** Risk of bias 2.0.

**Strategy of data synthesis:** (1) Meta-analysis using RevMan 5.4 software. (2) The main outcome will be the level of prolonged grief disorder/ complicated grief. (3) Using the coding table. (4) Follow the PRISMA flow.

**Subgroup analysis:** (1) The type of the intervention. (2) Intervention period. (3) The intervention providers. (4) The evaluation time.

**Sensitivity analysis:** Sensitivity analysis was carried out by Revman 5.4 software to reflect the sensitivity of this study through the change in effect size by removing one of the literatures.

**Language restriction:** The language will be limit on English and Chinese.

**Country(ies) involved:** Taiwan.

**Other relevant information:** This study analyzes bereaved families with prolonged grief disorder/ complicated grief rather than bereaved families in general.

**Keywords:** Systematic review; meta-analysis; bereaved family; complicated grief; prolonged grief disorder; grief intervention.

**Dissemination plans:** The research to be published upon completion.

**Contributions of each author:**

Author 1 - YUANTING WU - Author 1 drafted the manuscript.

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Author 2 - Wei-Shu Lai - The author provided suggestions of the context and drafted some of the manuscripts.

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