

Published evidence on function of palliative bereavement services: Acting as a safety-net

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BACKGROUND

The World Health Organization states palliative care does not end with the death of the patient. Provision of bereavement information and support is an expected function of specialist palliative care services.

Several authors have described bereavement services as providing universal interventions regardless of the need.

Typically, clear descriptions of the purpose of service-initiated contact and how palliative bereavement services assess the need for counselling is missing.

RESEARCH QUESTION

To identify how palliative bereavement services literature described the purpose regarding service-initiated contact and assessment of need for grief counselling.

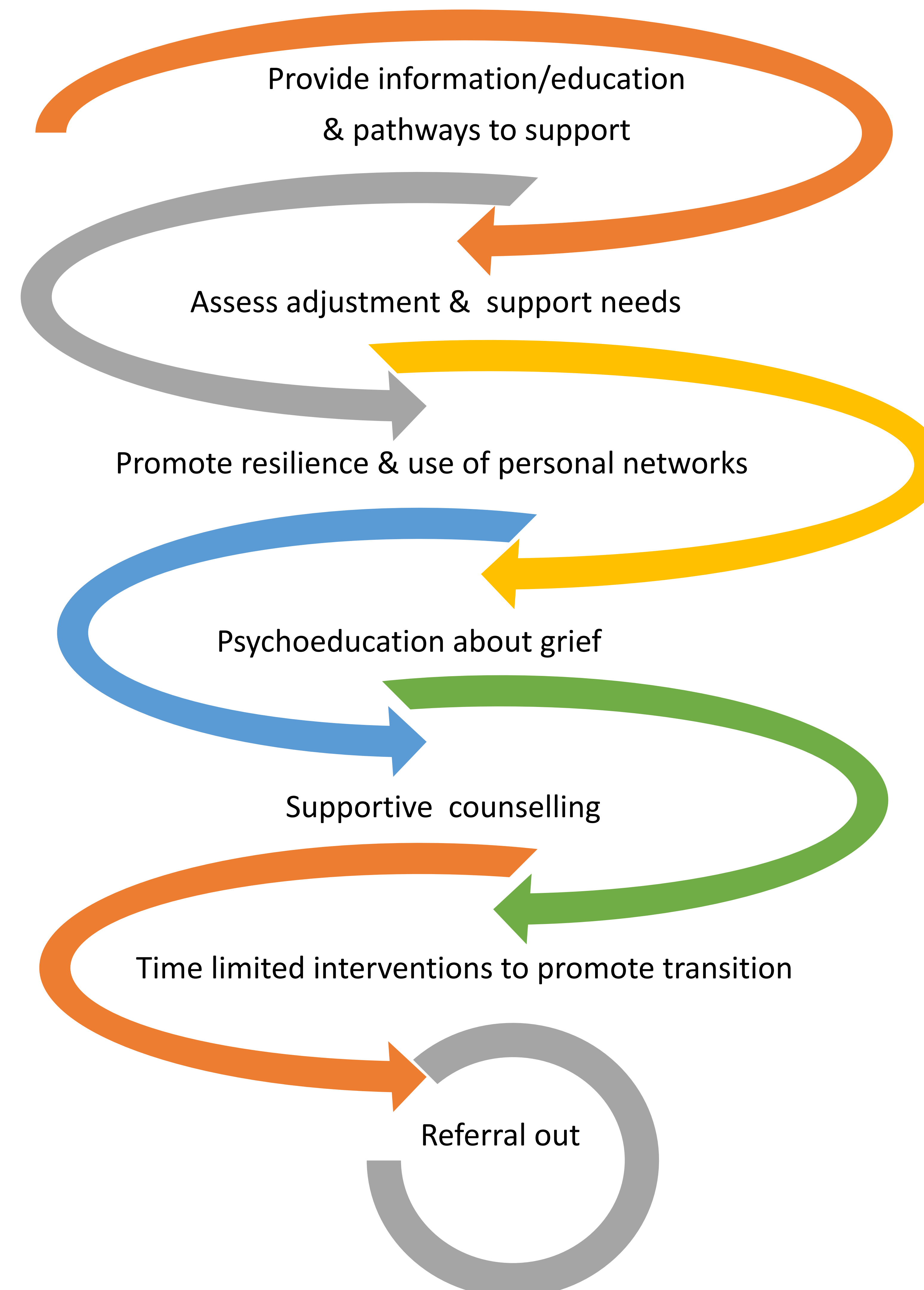
METHODS

A scoping review was undertaken (2020) using co-reviewers and a specialist research Librarian.

- Search terms were built on online database CareSearch keywords for palliative care and bereavement.
- Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to identify detailed data on the aims and approach methods of bereavement services located in adult palliative care services.
- Seven data-bases were searched, resulting in 5990 articles being identified.
- Eight papers met the inclusion criteria and spanned a 38-year timeframe. Older ones were included due to reflecting some present day services.

Analysis: Inductive thematic analysis was chosen to enable themes to emerge from the data.

RESULTS



- We identified that Bereavement Services had a primary purpose through acting as a safety net.
- They achieved this by service-initiated contact that provided information and pathways to support to ease the process for people.
- Increasing general grief literacy was identified as an aim of services.
- Services also undertook assessment of need for supportive counselling interventions throughout the acute period of grief and/or monitored adjustment through scheduled reviews during the first 12-months.
- Results indicate that services intended to facilitate ‘normal’ adjustment where an individual’s natural network did not meet their needs.
- Services also recognised their limits and referred out when and where they could.

DISCUSSION

Implications:

- Mapping how bereavement services define their aim and purpose is an important first step to identifying their unique role in the context of bereavement services.
- While only eight articles met our criteria, the data provides a useful guide to further research.
- Researchers and bereavement service providers need to work together to build knowledge about the function and role services and their contributions to the community.

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