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Distance-Technology Delivered Grief Support Program: Perceived Quality and Satisfaction of Training Provided to Social Workers

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Death of a close family member or friend can be overwhelming for an individual. The loss of someone initiates the natural response of grief. Grief covers a wide variety of challenging emotions and thoughts; and guidance in a form of grief support in how to cope with these can be very helpful. Grief support can be found through individual counseling, grief support groups, reading materials, hospice organizations, other local organizations, websites, etc. However, not everyone has access to grief support. Those who live beyond cities or towns have very limited access to grief support. Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program, a non-profit organization located in the College of Nursing at the University of Utah, has been awarded a research grant to extend grief support groups to rural/frontier Utah via distance-technology. The mission of Caring Connections is to provide excellent evidence-based bereavement care to grieving persons in the intermountain west through clinician facilitated support groups; and, in keeping with the academic mission of the University and the College of Nursing, to provide opportunity for clinical education in grief and loss to students in the health care professions, and to conduct research which promotes greater understanding of loss, grief and bereavement. Caring Connections offers a range of grief groups relating to a variety of losses and serves over 400 individuals each year. Through this grant, Caring Connections grief support program will increase accessibility to bereavement care, demonstrate innovative ways to extend bereavement care in outpatient and community settings, and reduce the health care gap in underserved communities. Utah currently has 93 licensed hospice agencies and only eight of them serve the rural-frontier Utah. Hospice professionals in the eight agencies are faced with the challenges of driving long distances to reach their patients to provide care. This program will also decrease the challenges of time and travel for hospice professionals and the bereaved population in this area for grief support. My role in this research project is to: (1) Collaborate with Dr. Supiano and the research team in developing study and social work participant relevant satisfaction questions and quality improvement questions regarding the training of social workers in grief support group skills, (2) Collaborate in developing the interviewing method for obtaining data (telephone vs. telehealth platform), (3) Conduct quality assurance and participant satisfaction interviews with social work facilitators prior and immediately after training, and upon completion of an eight-week grief support group. (4) Assist with evaluating facilitator protocol adherence data. (5) Assist with data entry and evaluation. Through this we will be able to evaluate quality of support provided to the bereavement population in rural/frontier Utah via distance technology and diminish healthcare discrepancies.

Title:

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Keywords:

grief support, learner evaluation and telehealth

References:

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Abstract Summary:

Through a research grant provided by the Cambia Health Foundation, Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program, a non-profit organization located in the College of Nursing at the University of Utah, extends grief support groups to rural/frontier Utah via distance-technology to diminish health care gap in under-served communities.

Content Outline:

I. Introduction

- Objective

Overall objective of Dr. Supiano's study, including partnerships

Daniela McCroby's objective within the study

- Background

Impact of grief on an individual

Role of Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program

Cambia Health Foundation Research grant

II. Body

- Methods

Collaborated with Dr. Supiano and the research team in developing study and social work participant relevant satisfaction questions and quality improvement questions regarding the training of social workers in grief support group skills

Collaborate in developing the interviewing method for obtaining data (telephone vs. telehealth platform)

Conduct quality assurance and participant satisfaction interviews with social work facilitators prior and immediately after training, and upon completion of an eight-week grief support group.

Assist with evaluating facilitator protocol adherence data

Assist with data entry and evaluation

- Results

Created Assessment instruments-satisfaction and quality improvement questionnaire for social work trainees

Developed and tested end-user technology manual

Ongoing evaluation of grief understanding and group skills of hospice social workers.

III. Conclusion

We have completed two of four scheduled distance-delivered grief support groups.

To date participating social workers trainees had prior experience with grief but were under prepared in group work clinical skills.

Social worker trainees were highly satisfied with training and the group co-facilitation experience.

Grief group participants successfully utilized the technology largely due to high quality end- user manual and available real time support.

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Professional Experience: Nursing Student- University of Utah- Salt Lake City, UT Fall 2017 Gerontology Minor-University of Utah-Salt Lake City, UT December 2016 Nutrition Minor- University of Utah- Salt Lake City, UT Spring 2017 Caring Connections: A Hope and Comfort in Grief Program University of Utah, College of Nursing Student Intern (work-study) September 2015- Present • Assisted in the participant recruitment, data collection, and transcription of imaginary conversations for complicated grief research study (PI: K. Supiano) • Managed participant recruitment and participation for non-research bereavement groups: 1)Loss of Spouse 2) Suicide 3) Drug Overdose 4) Traditional 5)Perinatal • Organized and distributed educational and promotional materials about Caring Connections at academic community-based events, and bereaved population from University of Utah Hospital • Assisted in the planning and implementation of the “Caring for Those Bereaved by Drug Overdose Death Conference”. • Revised Dealing with Sudden and Unexpected Death: A Handbook for Survivors 2016 edition.

Author Summary: Daniela is currently the student intern for Caring Connections. In March 2017, she was accepted into the Baccalaureate Nursing Program at the University of Utah. She has assisted in participant recruitment, data collection, organized and distributed educational and promotional materials about Caring Connections at academic community-based events and bereaved population from the

University of Utah Hospital. Her role in this project will further expand the skills in research methods suitable for her nursing career.