Title: A New Text-Based Approach to Delivering Quality Bereavement Care for Donor Families
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Professional and community support during bereavement is in short supply and can be difficult to access (Aoun et al., 2020). Only a minority of grievers are extremely satisfied with the support they receive (Cacciatore et al., 2021). Researchers and bereavement professionals are seeking innovative low-cost, high-reach forms of support to meet grievers' needs (Zuelke et al., 2021). OPOs and tissue banks often have limited Aftercare staffing and lack the bandwidth to provide more individualized bereavement services to families. However, OPOs and tissue bank providers are uniquely positioned to offer high-quality bereavement care through existing Aftercare services without added staff time. This presentation will report on grievers' perceptions of the acceptability and helpfulness of Help Texts, an innovative, ongoing, expert, text-based grief support service provided to donor families. The messages, grounded in contemporary models of grief and coping, provide support, information, and encourage engagement in adaptive coping behaviors (Levesque et al., 2023). Participants in the evaluation were bereaved family members over the age of 18, located across the US, who received grief-informed text support as part of their aftercare services. A one-time cross-sectional survey was administered to (N=147). Eighty-eight percent of subscribers were female, 9.3% male and 2% preferred not to say. Approximately 39% of subscribers were between the ages of 40-59, 20.4% < 45 years old, and 21% were aged 60+. The most reported relationship to the deceased was the death of spousal loss (38.4%), death of a parent (28.7%), death of a child (22%), and 10.9% identified other relationships. Nearly 53% of subscribers reported their loss as sudden and unexpected with the top three causes of death listed as other illness (27.5%), cardiovascular (19.1%), accident (10.2%), natural (9.3%), drug or alcohol related (8.3%), and other losses such as cancer, suicide, homicide, COVID-19, Stroke, etc., made up the remaining 25.6%. Based on program administrative data and survey responses, the 6-month program retention rate was 93% and 85% at 12 months. Among subscribers who met inclusion criteria for and completed a brief evaluation (N=146, response rate = 65%), 94% rated the program as "Moderately Helpful" or "Very helpful" and 75% rated it as contributing "A great deal" or "Considerably" to their sense of being supported in their grief. Approximately 38% of grievers signed up in the first two months after their loss, and 73% within the first 6 months. In their written feedback, most respondents expressed their deep appreciation for the program (e.g., "Thanks for being there for me, I feel less alone") or listed something they liked or found helpful (e.g., "I am learning to have options in my pain"). These findings suggest that Help Texts, a new and innovative grief-informed texting program is an accessible form of bereavement care in acute grief and that bereaved family members find the service to be acceptable, helpful, and supportive in their grief. This preliminary data suggests that Help Texts may be a promising low-cost and effective addition to existing Aftercare programs to more effectively meet the bereavement needs of donor families.

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Introduction

OPOs and tissue banks often have limited Aftercare staffing and lack the bandwidth to provide more individualized bereavement services to families. However, OPOs and tissue bank providers are uniquely positioned to offer high-quality bereavement care through existing Aftercare services without added staff time. This study reported on grievers' perceptions of the acceptability and helpfulness of Help Texts, an innovative, ongoing, expert, text-based grief support service provided to donor families. The findings suggest that Help Texts, is an accessible form of bereavement care in acute grief and that bereaved donor families find the service to be acceptable, helpful, and supportive in their grief.
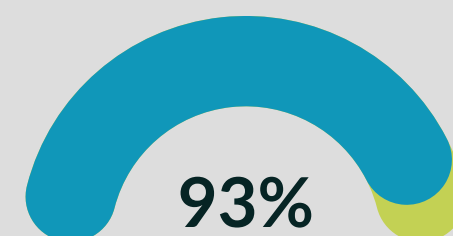
Objective

To assess the reach, retention, and user satisfaction of a grief-informed texting program amongst donor families.

Methodology

- Chi-square tests & Cramer's V examined retention
- Two 5-point Likert scale questions
- Qualitative analysis used deductive & inductive coding
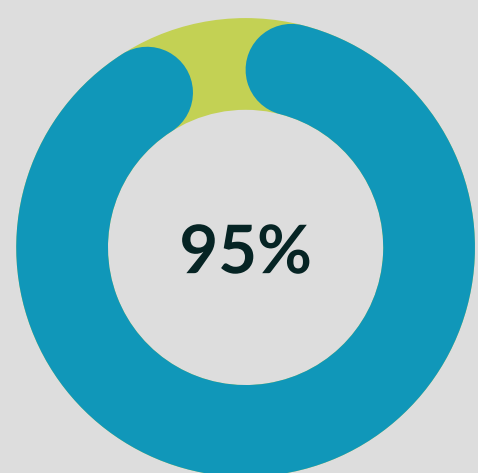
95% of subscribers rated the texts supportive and 94% found texts to be helpful

93% Retention rate

- *"They have helped me deal with my sons passing and they have helped me to understand what my feelings are and how to deal with them. They always seem to come at the right time also and I love them"*
- *"When it feels like everybody else has forgotten my dad, Help Texts remembers."*
- *"It's brought me comfort and given me tips on how to deal with the loss of my mom and taught me things that I didn't know about grief 😌 thank y'all."*

Findings

- *n* = 147, response rate = 65%
- 73% enrolled <6 months of the death—37.9% <2 months
- Retention rate 93%
- 95% of survey respondents rated the texts as supportive & 94% said texts were helpful
- Qualitative analysis revealed that texts helped with coping, provided emotional support, and were well-timed with their grief experience

Conclusion

Help Texts demonstrated feasibility and high acceptability when it comes to supporting bereaved donor families. This preliminary data suggests that Help Texts may be a promising low-cost and effective addition to existing Aftercare programs that can enhance care and effectively meet the bereavement needs of donor families.

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