

Reliance on voluntary sector support for suicide bereavement 'unsustainable and inappropriate'

2 May 2014

People bereaved by the suicide of a partner and mothers losing an adult child to suicide run a significantly higher risk of suicide compared to people bereaved after sudden deaths from other causes. The psychological impact on other members of the family is also serious: children who lose a mother to suicide have an increased risk of depression, while people who lose a child to suicide have an increased likelihood of psychiatric admission for mental illness.

The findings come from a new Review, published to coincide with the launch of *The Lancet Psychiatry* journal, reviewing the evidence from 57 studies comparing the effect of [suicide](#) bereavement on death, mental health, and social functioning of [family members](#), friends, and other close contacts of the deceased with the effects of other sudden bereavements.

According to lead author Dr Alexandra Pitman from University College London (UCL) in the UK, "Based on published evidence we made a rough estimate that between 48 and 500 million people worldwide experience suicide bereavement each year. In our review we show that the impact of suicide appears to vary according to kinship, but that all members of the deceased's family and friends are likely to need support. Our findings are striking given that [suicide prevention](#) policies tend to treat people bereaved by suicide as one group, rather than recognising that bereaved partners and mothers may be at greater risk of suicide than other relatives and friends. In view of the extent of the risks associated with suicide bereavement, the current reliance on the voluntary sector for bereavement support (for example Cruse Bereavement Care, Samaritans, Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide, Winston's Wish) may be unsustainable and inappropriate. More input may be needed from health and social services as well

as education of the public on the best ways to respond to a bereaved person."

Provided by Lancet

APA citation: Reliance on voluntary sector support for suicide bereavement 'unsustainable and inappropriate' (2014, May 2) retrieved 12 October 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-05-reliance-voluntary-sector-suicide-bereavement.html>

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