

A greater need for grief support due to COVID-19

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Curtin University research has found people grieving a COVID-related death would benefit from timely support and care to reduce the high risk of experiencing problems in important areas of everyday life.

Published in the *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*, the study is the first to focus on psychological factors that explain why people bereaved by COVID-19 might experience challenges in important areas of life, work, leisure, and relationships.

Lead author, Associate Professor Lauren Breen from the Curtin School of Population Health worked with American researchers to survey people in the United States who had lost a close person due to COVID-19 and found key [psychological factors](#) such as separation distress, dysfunctional grief, and post-traumatic stress explained why they were having trouble coping in key areas of life.

"Existing research shows that grief from deaths during the pandemic was felt more acutely than

that following both deaths before the pandemic, and deaths from other natural causes," Associate Professor Breen said.

"This exacerbation of grief is due to the necessary restrictions that affect people's access to dying loved ones, limit their participation in important rituals like funerals, and reduce the physical social support they would otherwise receive from friends and family."

"There is a real need for strategies such as the integration of psychological care into [palliative care](#) to facilitate efficient and cost-effective means of supporting people who are grieving," Associate Professor Breen said.

"Better screening and assessment of bereaved people is also required, along with more accessible support services, development of improved therapies and grief interventions, and an increased number of [grief](#) specialists in the workforce."

The paper is titled "Psychological Risk Factors of Functional Impairment Following COVID-19 Deaths."

More information: Lauren J. Breen et al. Psychological Risk Factors of Functional Impairment After COVID-19 Deaths, *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2021.01.006](#)

Provided by Curtin University

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