

## **Editorial Policy of *Bereavement Care***

### ***Aim***

The aim of *Bereavement Care* is to improve understanding of bereavement and to enhance the quality of care and support provided to bereaved people in all parts of the world.

### ***Readership***

Bereaved people seek help from many different sources including: Health care staff, social services, religious and pastoral professionals and volunteers, funeral services, bereavement services, counselling services, mutual help groups, emergency services, occupational counsellors and managers, clinical psychologists and psychiatrists. These constitute the target readership of *Bereavement Care*. Since they come from a range of academic and non-academic disciplines there is no single academic language, jargon or scientific discipline that is shared by all.

Religious and cultural differences exist both between and within geographical populations. These have an important influence on the attitudes, knowledge and assumptions about death and bereavement within these populations.

The problems to which bereavement gives rise are many and varied and there is no single theory, intervention, philosophy, religion or therapy that will meet all of these needs. It follows that *Bereavement Care* should cover a wide range of topics.

### ***Sources of Relevant Information on Bereavement***

Important contributions to our understanding of bereavement have been made, and continue to be made, by several scientific disciplines, most notably psychology, sociology, and psychiatry. These arise out of qualitative and quantitative studies, from careful clinical reports and, occasionally, from auto-biographical accounts of experience.

In addition bereavement has been a topic of wide interest in literature, philosophy, and the arts throughout historical time. Some of this knowledge is of help to bereaved people.

### ***Content***

*Bereavement Care* is currently an English language, international journal, for all professionals and volunteers who provide care for bereaved people of all ages, nationalities and religions.

The international readership means that editors need to welcome appropriate contributions from a wide range of cultures, and to ensure that contributors do not

use language that assumes that their readers share their own culture. We are all, to some extent, blinkered by our culture.

Because bereavement gives rise to powerful emotions many contributions will carry a high emotional charge. Indeed this may add to their accessibility, relevance and interest. But it does place on the editors a particular responsibility to beware of sentimentality, and the misuse of emotional phraseology, to generate inappropriate enthusiasm. History is replete with cults, cycles of violence, and extremism led by authorities and supposed 'experts'.

We need to make the best possible use of the new methods of communication that are now becoming available while developing an appropriately critical eye for any problems that arise. In the same way, we should make our readers aware of innovative services, theories and opinions, while subjecting them to critical evaluation.

We hold to the view that those who provide care for bereaved people should make use of the best available evidence and skill that they can attain. When scientific evidence is available this should be brought to their attention in language that they can understand.

We welcome debate and discussion, avoiding partiality and mystification, and insisting that contributors avoid rude, sexist, extremist, or excessively emotive language.

Although bereaved people often have problems that have little to do with bereavement we must be careful not to lose focus. By the same token, we know that bereavement is not the only situation in which losses arise, indeed losses of one sort or another cause much human misery and we must beware of letting our sympathy blur our boundaries. For instance we do not accept contributions about the care of the dying, there are many journals of Palliative Care that cover that field. On the other hand it is quite appropriate to include pre-bereavement support for individuals or families within our ambit. Likewise, reviewers of books may need to be reminded that they should focus their review on those parts of the book that are relevant to bereavement.

### ***House Style***

Most readers are literate in English and have, at least, an elementary understanding of bereavement. However, the wide range of disciplines and nationalities from which they arise means that, unlike most academic journals, we must avoid academic and scientific jargon. Ideas and language that may be in common use within psychoanalysis or sociology are often misunderstood or unintelligible to members of other disciplines. Even the word 'mourning' has quite different meanings to different disciplines. Editors need to develop an eye for such language without 'talking down' to the readership.

This implies that the style should be accessible, well-phrased and appropriately weighty, without being stuffy. A certain lightness of touch can make an otherwise complex and/or frightening topic interesting and acceptable.

As well as communicating knowledge and debate we have an important role to play in inspiring and promoting quality of service, training and research.

### ***Methods of Communication***

We are not in the business of entertainment, but need to attract and maintain the attention and commitment of our readers. This means making use of a variety of visual and verbal methods of communication. The advent of the internet opens the door to the use of a new range of methods, including video imagery, which were not possible in the past.

The following overall format has proved successful but is open to modification:

- *A front page* with an arresting illustration relevant to the content of the journal. Beneath it banner headlines of the principle contents.
- *A contents page* and an editorial page containing the main editorial. The *main editorial* should not be a slavish repetition of the contents, rather it is an opportunity for the editor to draw out, from the journal, matters of special note, to comment on current events and opinions, and to give his or her own slant on matters of special interest and importance to our readers.
- A number of *main articles* all of which are peer-reviewed and contain an abstract suitable for publication on search engines and a full list of references. Editorial comments on the article may draw attention to wider issues and other articles on the same topic, particularly any that have appeared in *Bereavement Care*. A picture of the author(s) with essential information about them adds interest and a human touch.
- *Occasional articles on special topics of interest* include but are not limited to:
  - Bereavement in the Arts* Drawing attention to particular music, plays, paintings etc. of interest to our readers.
  - Spotlight on Practice* Drawing attention to teaching, research and innovative services. This could include services in development and not yet fully evaluated.
  - Broader Horizons*. Reviewing topics that are tangential to bereavement but relevant to service to bereaved people.
  - First Person Article*. A regular slot by bereaved people focussing on particular aspects of their experience and indicating what they found helpful and unhelpful (Possibly in the form of responses to questions from an interviewer).
  - Bereavement across Cultures*. A regular slot featuring a different view of bereavement in each edition.
- *Reports of Conferences* or other events of interest to readers. These can be extremely boring if they contain nothing but lists of titles and congratulations. The aim is to draw attention to worthwhile contributions to knowledge and to provide critical comment on significant issues.

- *Webwatch* draws attention to items on the web of interest to readers and provides critical comment.
- *Reviews of Books, Films and Articles* from journals and other media selected for their importance and relevance to our readers.
- An *index* is published in the journal annually.

### ***Advertising***

We welcome advertising of products, events, and services likely to be of interest to our readers provided that these are of good repute and in keeping with the dignity and policies of the journal.

### ***Editors***

The editors are responsible for all of the content of the journal. It follows that the several editors of *Bereavement Care* should, between them, include persons who have a good, and up-to-date, knowledge of each of the major disciplines relevant to the care of bereaved people. This does not mean that all editors have to know all about all disciplines, but they should respect each other's viewpoints.

They should be able to cross the boundaries between disciplines, be open to new ideas, and able to judge those that are well founded from those that are not. They should be fearless in identifying and criticising woolly and illogical thinking. This said, they should recognise that potential contributors will not all be equally clear thinking and may need help from the editors in order to meet and maintain the high standard of the journal.

### ***Duties of Editors***

It is our policy to rotate the main editorial responsibility for each edition of *Bereavement Care* within the editorial board. This does not mean that each edition will be confined to the special interests of the editor, indeed we try to cover a wide spectrum of topics within each edition. We expect editors to play an active part in inviting and encouraging contributions while making it clear to the author(s) that all such contributions will undergo the same process of anonymous peer-review as any other.

Although Board Meetings are infrequent their very infrequency makes it important that they be attended by all editors.

### ***Advisory Editors***

These are persons whose advice, distinction, and special knowledge, is respected by the Editorial Board, and who are willing to allow their names to be associated with *Bereavement Care*. They will include internationally renowned individuals who would normally be considered for membership of the Board but are prevented for geographical or other reasons from attending meetings.

They will be consulted, from time to time, for advice, publicity, or other assistance in keeping with their special knowledge and position. They may, occasionally, be invited to edit an edition of the journal, to write a main editorial, and/or to invite, select, or approve contributions relevant to their own areas of interest.

Although they have no prescribed duties, the Board hopes that they will take a personal interest in the journal, bring it to the attention of others, and offer advice or criticism to the editors whenever they consider it appropriate to do so.

### ***Constraints***

As our international readership grows we expect to find ourselves increasingly drawn into debate on the many political, ethical, religious and legal issues that are relevant to the lives of bereaved people. While we should not hesitate to engage with these issues we must take care to avoid imperilling our readership or editors by contravening laws, prohibitions and the deeply held beliefs of our readers. The key here is to maintain balance and impartiality wherever it is ethical to do so.

We are all constrained by the financial and other resources available to us. This makes it hard to recruit editors from outside Western Europe and to communicate across barriers of language. To some extent we can cross these boundaries by recruiting as editors and advisory editors people now living in Western Europe who come from other cultures. We hope to find ways of communicating with people from other linguistic groups, to learn from them and, possibly, to set an example that they may follow.