PARENTAL CANCER & DEATH IN DIVORCED FAMILIES

Double bereavement & interventions targeting child mental health

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DOUBLE BEREAVEMENT

definition

• The double loss & bereavement experienced as a consequence of parental divorce in combination with the subsequent parental death or critical illness with imminent death
BACKGROUND

• Divorced families with children experiencing parental critical cancer and death
• An unseen challenge in health care
• Children at risk
RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY – RISK OF OVERLOAD AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Parental death in young adults with divorced compared to non-divorced parents: The effect on prolonged grief and mental health (Death Studies, 2019) J. Marcussen, L. Hounsgaard, S. Möller, M. O’Connor, R. Wilson, F. Thuen)
NURSING SUPPORT AND INTERVENTIONS ARE CRUCIAL

- Family support program
- Therapeutic relationship
- Multidisciplinary support
- Individual and in groups
- Parental support
PURPOSE OF STUDY

“to identify nursing interventions suitable to support children, and their divorced families, following their combined experiences of parental divorce, and parental cancer and death.”
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# childMH

## CLINICAL REASONING FOR NURSING INTERVENTIONS TARGETING THE DOUBLE BEREAVED CHILD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Collecting information about family structure</td>
<td>1.1 Knowledge about family structure</td>
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<td>1.2 Getting access through parents’ and child</td>
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<td>2. Assessment of support needs</td>
<td>2.1 Children’s double bereavement in a future perspective</td>
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<td>2.2 Estimate need of professional support</td>
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<td>2.3 Create access and involve the child</td>
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<td>3. Initiation of well-being support</td>
<td>3.1 Gather family to cooperate on children’s future</td>
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<td>3.2 Support parents through knowledge</td>
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<td>4. Coordination and follow-up</td>
<td>4.1 Coordination throughout progress and transitions</td>
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<td>4.2 Being guided, or not, by guidelines</td>
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<td>4.3 Target support on children’s future and well-being</td>
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DIVORCED FAMILY FOCUSED MODEL

**Divorced Family Focused Care Model**

**PHASE 1**
Collecting information about family structure
- **Step 1**: Knowledge of parental collaboration, resources and other involved professionals
- **Step 2**: Mapping the divorced family structure and resources persons Content to access to the child

**PHASE 2**
Assessment of support needs
- **Step 1**: Knowledge about child’s wellbeing, future and relationship according to divorced family structure (parents, step-parents and grand-parent)
- **Step 2**: Involve the child and divorced family Assess need of professional support

**PHASE 3**
Initiating of well-being support
- **Step 1**: Provide knowledge and support on age, reactions, signs of problems Provide support possibilities
- **Step 2**: Gather divorced family and network (e.g., partner, grand parents, school) Establish support

**PHASE 4**
Coordination and Follow-up
- **Step 1**: Divorced Family Focused Care
  Provide information and support throughout illness, death and bereavement
- **Step 2**: Designate a primary coordinator responsible for coordinating well-being support for the relative child
  Following-up
PHASE 1 - COLLECTING INFORMATION ABOUT FAMILY STRUCTURE

Knowledge about
• Parental collaboration
• Family resources
• Mapping the family structure

Include
• Family members
• Know children’s name, age
• Consent and contact information
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## RESULTS

**Table 2. Examples From the Structural Analysis.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Units of meaning (what is said)</th>
<th>Units of significance (what the text speaks about)</th>
<th>Themes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You have in mind the whole time, this mother she could die... and those two kids that actually live with her... and you do not have any contact with the father... We ask about the co-work between the parents” (district nurse D2).</td>
<td>The importance of knowing the family structure in a divorced family</td>
<td>Collecting information of family structure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Knowledge about
• Child and young adults well-being
• Current and future living arrangements
• Important relationships in the family system

Actions
• Create contact and involve the child and divorced family
• Estimate the need for professional support
PHASE 3 - INITIATION OF WELL-BEING SUPPORT

Knowledge
- age, reactions, support possibilities, problem signs

Actions
- Gather the families
- Cooperation of the child’s future
PHASE 4 - COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Knowledge
• Ongoing role of providing knowledge throughout progress and transitions

Actions
• Ongoing role of providing support
• Strategic role of coordination of divorced family focused care
• Include interdisciplinary professionals
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Collect information about the family structure
Early prevention
Designate a coordinator
Policy and evidence-based guidelines
Policy supporting the model
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Maya O´Connor, Sören Møller, Merete Golles Laursen
Marcussen, J., Thuen, F., Bruun, P., Hounsgaard, L. Wilson, R.L. (under review)
Parental divorce and parental death – an integrative systematic review of children’s double bereavement.


Marcussen, J., Hounsgaard, L., O’Connor, M., Møller, S., Wilson, R., Thuen, F. (2019b)
Parental death in young adults with divorced compared to non-divorced parents: The effect on prolonged grief and mental health. *Death Studies* https://doi.org/10.1080/07481187.2019.1648337

Marcussen, J., Thuen, F., O’Connor, M., Wilson, R., Hounsgaard, L. (under review)
Double bereavement, mental health consequences and need for support of children and young adults – when a divorced parent dies of cancer.