Video modelling to provide support for bereaved caregivers of an advanced cancer patient

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Bereaved caregivers of advanced cancer patients are often consumed by many losses, overwhelming negative thoughts and emotions, and a lack of support. Many will struggle during bereavement. Although each situation and experience is unique, bereaved caregivers are greatly impacted by the experience of caregiving itself, as well as the relationship between the caregiver and the person with advanced cancer, and their own support systems.

In order to address the support needs of bereaved caregivers, one of the aims of the “Honoring the Voices of Bereaved Caregivers” project was to synthesize the qualitative research about bereaved caregivers of advanced cancer patients. This metasynthesis project was funded by a Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Knowledge Synthesis Grant. In total, 22 pertinent articles were identified through a systematic database search, findings were aggregated, and common themes and key findings were elucidated. The studies described the challenges faced by caregivers during bereavement and how difficult it was to construct a new identity after caregiving. Finding balance, accepting and acknowledging, and finding new meaning and purpose were often described. The physical and emotional exhaustion of caregiving itself placed them at risk for complicated grief, depression, and physical illness. A range of supports is needed to promote more positive outcomes for bereaved caregivers.

Knowledge translation and dissemination of research findings is often a slow process. Along with traditional dissemination techniques (e.g., journal articles, conference posters, abstracts, presentations), we also pursued other more innovative activities (e.g., pamphlets, grassroots outreach, public forums, webinars and videos). Our multimodal knowledge dissemination strategy facilitated timely dissemination of findings to community caregivers and stakeholders in policy and practice.

At one of our public forums, we recruited bereaved caregivers to be interviewed on camera about their experiences of caregiving and bereavement. A professional videographer was available to do the filming. The semi-structured video interviews were transcribed and reorganized into a script with excerpts from each of the bereaved caregiver role models and other stakeholders; the script was then reorganized according to our main findings from the metasynthesis. The intended target audience for each video was different, so multiple scripts were produced.

Our videos can be found at the following links:
“Honoring voices after caregiving”: https://vimeo.com/142840098
“Honoring voices: Walking alongside the caregiver”: https://vimeo.com/142545652
“Reinventing a life: Sherrill Miller—Her story”: https://vimeo.com/163953251

The videos were publicly launched, promoted on social media (i.e., Facebook and twitter), incorporated into brochures, posted on stakeholder websites, and promoted through grassroots community outreach. Videos were evaluated in several ways: public forum, focus groups, and online questionnaires. Feedback from the videos was largely positive.