



# Assessment of Grief Related Mental Health Disorders in Primary Care



Sapana R. Patel, PhD<sup>1</sup>, Elizabeth Mitchell, LCSW, Liz Lever, LMSW, M. Katherine Shear, MD<sup>2</sup> and Virna Little, PsyD<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Institute for Family Health, <sup>2</sup> Columbia University Graduate School of Social Work

## Background

Bereavement is one of life's most stressful experiences and is associated with an increased risk for a range of physical and mental health problems, especially among those with complicated grief (CG) [Stroebe et al, 2007].

However, there is a dearth of treatment programs in primary care- specifically at the Institute for Family Health- designed to recognize, monitor and support bereaved patients.

## Objective

The overall objective of this project is to develop and test the feasibility and effectiveness of a stepped care model to recognize, monitor and support grief among bereaved adults at the Institute for Family Health. This objective will be achieved through:

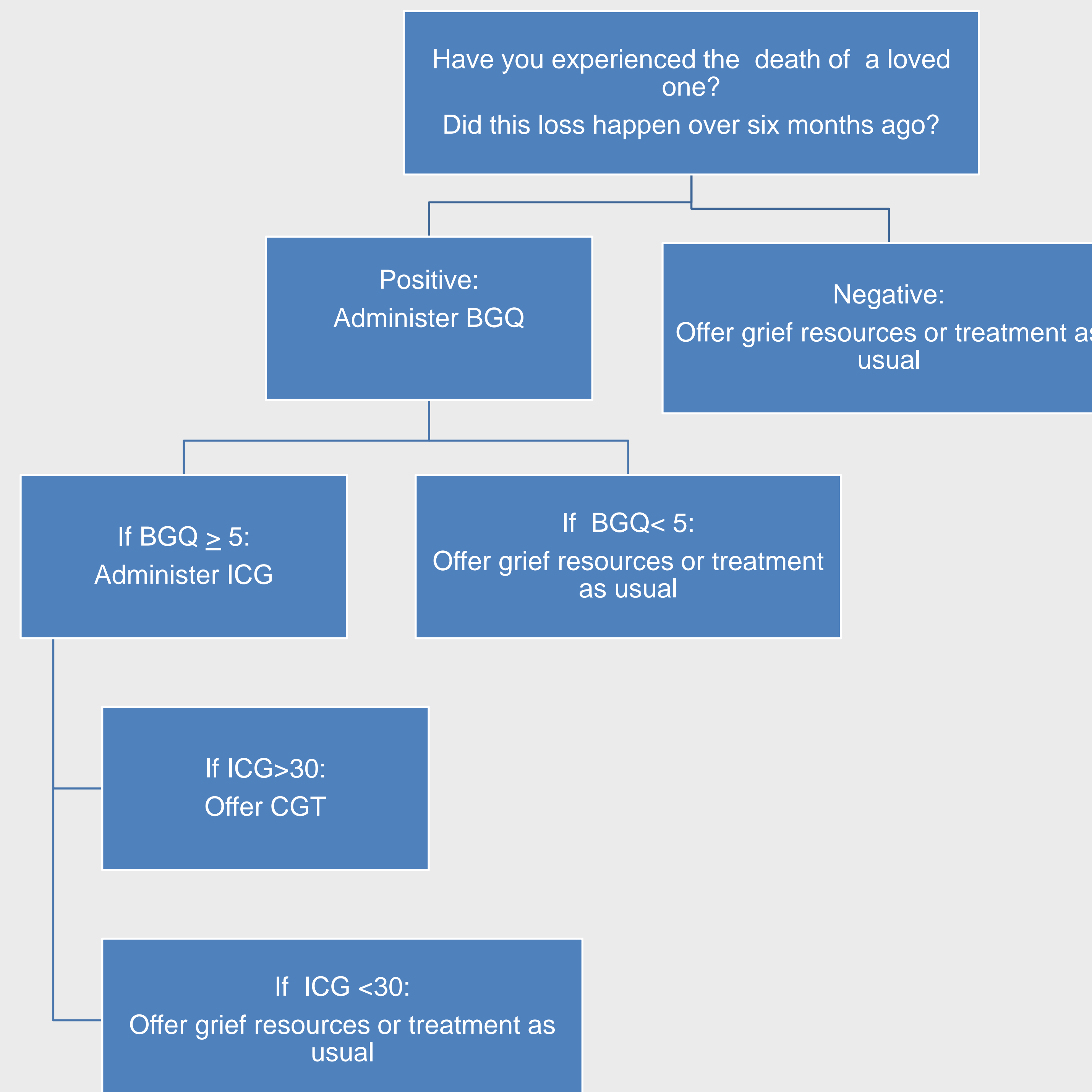
- Needs assessment:** Train behavioral health providers to screen and follow adults for loss and complicated grief through EPIC-integrated standard assessment tools
- Support:** Build a grief toolkit of resources for clinicians and patients. Train a team of clinicians to provide complicated grief therapy (CGT), an evidence-based grief treatment.

## Aims

This poster will present data on the first step in our model, the assessment of grief related mental health problems. We will report on:

Prevalence of patients who screen positive for complicated grief using the Brief Grief Questionnaire (BGQ) and meet criteria for the syndrome as determined by the Inventory for Complicated Grief (ICG)

## Assessment Workflow and Care Model



## Methods

**Participants:** Patients seeking behavioral health care across six Institute centers

### Setting:

- Three New York City health centers:
  - Mount Hope Family Practice
  - Walton Family Health Center and Counseling Center
  - Sidney Hillman/Phillips Family Practice and Counseling Center
- Three Mid-Hudson Valley health centers:
  - Kingston Family Health Center and Counseling Center
  - Ellenville Family Health Center
  - New Paltz Family Health Center

### Intervention:

- One hour webinar training in the assessment of grief using standard instruments available in EPIC (BGQ and ICG)
- Grief toolkit comprised of community based resources for grief in the catchment area of clinics available in EPIC

**Evaluation:** Implementation of assessment instruments in routine psychosocial care between December 2014-February 2015, the first 3 months of a 12 -month period

## Results

Between December 2014 and February 2015:

- 1187 Institute patients report the death of a loved one
- 488 Institute patients experienced this loss more than 6 months ago
- 324 Institute patients screened positive for complicated grief using the BGQ
- 63 Institute patients met criteria for the syndrome of complicated grief using the ICG

**Table 1: Characteristics of Patients with CG**

Characteristic	Percent
<b>Age:</b>	50 (mean age in years [SD=14])
<b>Sex:</b>	
Female	73%
<b>Race:</b>	
White	14.3%
Black or African American	39.7%
Asian	3.2%
Some Other Race	31.7%
Declined/Unknown/Unavailable	11.1%
<b>Ethnicity:</b>	
Hispanic or Latino	41.3%
Not Hispanic or Latino	50.8%
Declined/Unknown/Unavailable	7.9%
<b>Location, Department:</b>	
Ellenville Family Practice, Social Work	4.8%
Kingston Family Practice and Counseling Center	4.8%
Phillips Family Practice and Counseling Center	42.7%
Walton Family Practice and Counseling Center	38.1%
Mt. Hope Family Practice, Social Work	4.8%
<b>Primary Reason for Visit:</b>	
Psychosocial	57.1%
Psychosocial Update	20.6%
Mental Health Walk-In	1.6%
Crisis Intervention	6.3%

## Discussion

Our data:

- Has identified a subpopulation (N=63) of diverse psychosocial services patients in need of treatment for CG
- Will guide training efforts of clinicians across six sites with an emphasis on clinicians delivering CGT in culturally competent manner

**Literature Cited:** Stroebe M, Schut H, Stroebe W. *Health outcomes of bereavement. Lancet 2007; 370: 1960–73*