

Table Two: Study Summary Characteristics and Results

First author & Year	Design and Quality Score	Country	Intervention	Sample	Outcomes and measures/ Qualitative methods	Results	Included in Narrative Synthesis and/or Thematic Synthesis
Agnew 2009 [62]	QS (+) Focus group	UK	Bereavement support group, 10 monthly sessions Group support Professional led	7 bereaved hospice caregivers	Focus Group Thematic analysis	Key themes; -Benefit from groups by feeling understood by others in similar situations. -Groups need to 'feel safe' in terms of where, when and what happens in them. -Groups need to offer the choice of listening or talking. -Groups should be inclusive and heterogenous.	Thematic Synthesis
Ando 2015 [54]	Uncontrolled Before and After (-)	USA	Bereavement life review, 2 sessions two weeks apart Individual support Professional led	20 bereaved Hawaiian American caregivers of cancer patients	Depression (BDI-11) Spiritual Wellbeing (FACIT-sp)	Statistically significant increases in spirituality and decreases in depression	Narrative Synthesis
Carter 2009 [53]	Uncontrolled Before and After (-)	USA	CBT for chronic insomnia, 2 sessions 2 weeks apart Individual support Professional led	11 bereaved caregivers of cancer patients	Depressive Symptoms (CESD) Sleep quality (PSQI, actigraphy, sleep logs, goal attainment scaling)	Self-reported improvements in sleep and reduction in depressive symptoms	Narrative Synthesis

Cronfalk 2010 [66]	Qualitative Study (+)	Sweden	Soft Tissue Massage, 8 weekly sessions Individual support Professional led	18 bereaved caregivers of cancer patients	Semi-structured Interviews Qualitative content analysis	Key themes; -Comfort and hope through relationships and interaction with professionals -Enabling rest, relaxation, feelings of peace -Space to focus on grief during session and other areas of life at other times -Forming new routines and structure in daily lives -Regaining mastery and achieving personal development	Thematic Synthesis
Diamond 2012 [63]	Mixed Methods Qualitative Component used (+)	UK	2 hospice bereavement counselling services Individual support Volunteer led with professional support for more complex cases	13 volunteers 23 bereaved hospice clients	Interviews used to administer quantitative and qualitative tools (HAT) Qualitative content analysis of data collected in HAT	Key themes; -Clients gained insight, hope and reassurance from therapy sessions -Helped by focusing on difficult emotions and issues -Helped to explore options and engage in decision making and looking ahead. Helpful talking to those other than friends and family -Consistent and trusting relationship enabled clients able to open up and express feelings	Thematic Synthesis
Di Mola 1990 [73]	Qualitative Study (-)	Italy	Family End of Life home care with Bereavement support component Individual/Family support	33 volunteers 3 groups (10-12 per group)	Focus groups Analytical approach not described	Key themes; -Marginal role of volunteers in bereavement but main benefit seen as one of continued companionship and sharing of important life events	Thematic Synthesis

			Volunteer led				
Durepos 2017 [59]	Qualitative Study (++)	Canada	Psychoeducation caregiver support programme, ongoing weekly sessions Group support Professional led	Dementia caregiver participants (n=9,3 of which were bereaved) Caregivers not attending group (n=2) Health Care Professionals, including nurses and programme leaders (n=5)	Semi-structured interviews Qualitative content analysis	Key themes; -Strengthened community support - Sharing coping strategies -Sense of altruistic fulfilment by supporting others -Challenges such as group dynamics, content preferences, uncertainty over attending post-death, practical difficulties with attending	Thematic Synthesis
Fegg 2013 [42] Kogler 2013 [61]	RCT (++) Qualitative Study (++)	Germany	Existential behavioural therapy, six weekly groups for caregivers in the last stage of life and during acute bereavement: [Control: Usual treatment] Group support Professional led	Main trial: 160 bereaved and current carers Interviews: 16 bereaved caregivers of patients receiving palliative care	Depression (BSI) Quality of Life (SWLS; WHOQOL-BREF, QOL-NRS) Mood (PANAS) Semi-structured interviews Qualitative content analysis	Significant between group differences in self-reported measures at 1 year for depression and one Quality of life measure (QOL-NRS) Other measures Non-significant. Qualitative themes; -Learning coping strategies such as self-regulation, focusing on positive, mindfulness and avoiding preoccupation with negative thoughts. -Sharing coping strategies and learning from one another -Feeling understood by peers, sense of belonging and togetherness -Grief experiences understood as normal, enabling acceptance of these experiences.	Narrative Synthesis Thematic Synthesis

						-Enabled self-disclosure and expression of emotions.	
Finley 2010 [65]	Qualitative Study (+)	UK	Bereavement support groups at hospice, between 4 and 8 weekly sessions Group support Professional led	70 bereaved caregivers	Audit of group records Thematic analysis	Key themes; Family life, stories of death processes, grief and coping. Themes noted in the records included loss, loneliness, practical issues.	
Goldstein 1996 [72]	Cross Sectional Survey (-)	USA	Bereavement support group involving psychodynamic approaches and supportive educational techniques, 8 sessions. Group Support Professional led	5 bereaved adults from cancer centre	5 point Likert Type Scale to assess helpful features of group	Participants rated following questionnaire items as "useful": -Learning coping strategies -Helping others by sharing strategies, information and offering support -Normalisation of grief process -Being able to speak to 'strangers' about experiences without risk of alienating family and friends.	Narrative Synthesis
Goodman 2009 [55]	Cross Sectional Survey (-)	USA	One secular hospice support Group One Christian Support Group Group Support	83 bereaved individuals (49 attending hospice group)	Hopelessness (BHS) Religious coping (RCOPE)	No statistically significant differences between two groups	Narrative Synthesis
Goodkin 1998 [43] <i>Goodkin 1999 [77]</i>	RCT (+)	USA	Bereavement support group, 10 weekly sessions.	119 bereaved gay men (HIV+ and -)	Immunological function (HiV related cell counts)	At six months statistically significant between group differences in some HiV-related	Narrative Synthesis

			[Control: Usual treatment] Group Support Professional led		Neuroendocrine (Plasma cortisol level) Healthcare Visits Distress/Grief (TRIG/POMS) Secondary measures (ad-hoc complicated grief index and SIGH-AD)	cell counts; Plasma cortisol level and Healthcare utilization At ten weeks statistically significant between overall group differences in composite Distress/Grief scores and distress component of score, and in controlled analysis on grief measures	
Holtlander 2016 [44]	RCT (-) Qualitative Study (+)	Canada	Finding Balance writing tool with examples and exercises. Used over 2 weeks. [Control: wait list] Individual Support at home Self-administered tool	19 bereaved older caregivers of cancer patients	Feasibility data Hope, coping and balance (HHI;HGRC; IDWL) Qualitative questions asked at follow up Qualitative content analysis	Statistically significant difference in self-reported coping; IDWL Restoration Oriented Scale Qualitative themes: -Validation of emotions and helping themselves to move forward - Focusing on new ideas in finding balance -The timing of the intervention	Narrative Synthesis Thematic Synthesis
Hopmeyer 1994 [74]	Cross Sectional Survey (-)	Canada	Bereavement support group (closed membership), bi-weekly for six to eight sessions. Educational material presented and discussed. Group Support	Bereaved family members of cancer patients (N not stated)	Free text survey responses with ranking exercise Analysis of qualitative data not described	Key themes; -Place to vent experience -Chance to talk and opportunity to share grief and support -Comforting not to be alone and feeling similar to others. -Gender differences in preferences for group content.	Thematic Synthesis

			Peer facilitation with social worker in attendance.				
Houldin 1993 [52]	Uncontrolled Before and After (-)	USA	Relaxation training, 4 weekly sessions Mix of individual and group support Professional led	9 bereaved widows of cancer patients	Anxiety (SSTAI) Depression (BDI) Immunological assays (blood tests)	Self-reported mild to moderate improvements in appetite and sleep patterns	Narrative Synthesis
Johnson 2015 [67]	Qualitative Study (+)	UK	District nurses delivering home based bereavement support Individual/family support Professional led	5 district nurses delivering support	Semi-structured Interviews Thematic analysis	Key themes; -Nurses can become too involved with clients -Lack of formal training and education on bereavement but learning through experience just as valuable. -Having good rapport and trust with families enables better care	Thematic Synthesis
Kissane 1998 [75]	Qualitative Study (-) Piloting of Family Focused Grief Therapy	Australia	Development and piloting of FFGT (see Kissane 2006)	3 families of cancer patients used as case studies to explore how intervention helped them (15 'high risk' families participated in pilot study)	Practitioner Observation	Therapist observations; -The 'family that finds it hard to trust' became more cohesive, intimate and supportive of one another. -The 'family that listens but doesn't hear' acted more cohesively, became more communicative and understanding and experienced less conflict as a result. They were more able to comfort each other in grief.	Thematic Synthesis

						-The 'family hampered by conflict' became more understanding and sharing.	
Kissane 2006 [45]	RCT (++) (randomised by family)	Australia	Family Focused Grief Therapy, 4-8 sessions spread over 9-18 months [Control: No treatment] Family support Professional led	81 families of current becoming bereaved carers, identified as 'at risk' of poor social outcome (363 participants)	Distress (BSI) Depression (BDI) Social Adjustment (SAS)	Between group differences were non-significant except Brief Symptom Inventory scores	Narrative Synthesis
Kissane 2016 [46] <i>Mondia 2012 [68]</i> <i>Del Gaudio 2013 [69]</i>	RCT (++) (randomised by family) Qualitative Studies (+)	USA	Family Grief Therapy, 6 or 10 sessions over 7 months [Control: Standard Care] Family support Professional led	170 families of current becoming bereaved caregivers of cancer patients identified as 'at risk' of poor social outcome (620 participants) Therapy sessions of 8 minority ethnic families analysed [55,56]	Complicated Grief (CGI) Depression (BDI-11) Recordings and supervision notes of therapy sessions analysed qualitatively	Significant treatment effects found on CGI but not the BDI-11. Better outcomes resulted from 10 sessions v standard care for low-communicating and high-conflict groups compared with low-involvement families. Qualitative finding: need for therapists to possess appropriate cultural knowledge when working with minority ethnic families.	Narrative Synthesis Thematic Synthesis
Lieberman 1992 [49]	RCT (+)	USA	Brief group psychotherapy, 8 sessions [Control: No treatment]	56 bereaved spouses of cancer patients	Mental Health: Depression , Anxiety, Somatization (adapted HSC scales) Use of Psychotropic medication and	Significant effects on measures of self-esteem and role strain. All other measures non-significant.	Narrative synthesis

			<p>Group support</p> <p>Professional led</p>		<p>alcohol (5 item scale)</p> <p>Mourning (Author developed scales- Lieberman et al, 1986)</p> <p>Positive psychological states: Psychological Wellbeing (Bradburn Affect Balance Scale) Locus of control (PCMS) Self esteem (RSES)</p> <p>Social adjustment: Single Role Strain (Pearlin et al 1981) Stigma (Lieberman et al 1986)</p>		
<p>McGuiness 2011 [47] <i>McGuiness 2015 [64]</i></p>	<p>RCT (-) Qualitative Study (+)</p>	Ireland	<p>Creative arts group therapy, 8 weekly sessions [Control: wait list]</p> <p>Group Support</p> <p>Professional led</p>	20 bereaved hospice caregivers	<p>Grief (AAG; TRIG)</p> <p>Service evaluation questionnaires with open and closed questions</p> <p>Group based feedback</p> <p>Content analysis of qualitative data</p>	<p>No significant between group differences on quantitative outcomes.</p> <p>Qualitative themes; -Peer support and connectedness -Enabled expression of grief and emotions. -Participants experienced increased confidence and feelings of strength when facing the loss</p>	<p>Narrative Synthesis</p> <p>Thematic Synthesis</p>

						-Understanding grief as a 'process or journey' -Helpful talking to 'strangers' about experiences.	
Nappa 2015 [56]	Controlled Before and After (+)	Sweden	Bereavement support group, 5 weekly sessions Control: 2 groups- those 'unable to take part' and those who chose not to take part Group support Professional led	124 bereaved cancer caregivers	Grief (TRIG) Anxiety/Depression (HADS)	No significant between group differences on either outcome when comparing intervention group and those unable to take part.	Narrative Synthesis
Picton 2001 [57]	Qualitative Study (++)	Australia	Bereavement Support Groups, 8 weekly sessions Group support Professional led	17 bereaved relatives of cancer patients	Semi-structured Interviews Thematic analysis	Key themes; Majority of participants described the benefits of early participation, with minority favouring later entry to support program.	Thematic Synthesis
Pomeroy 2002 [51]	Uncontrolled Before and After (-) Qualitative Study (+)	USA	Bereavement support group, 6 weekly sessions. Group Support Professional led	5 bereaved carers of a person with AIDS	Anxiety (STAI); Depression (BDI); Grief (Grief Experience Inventory) Despair (Despair Sub Scale) Participant observation using field notes	Significant differences pre- post-test for anxiety and grief symptoms Qualitative themes; -Connectedness and sharing of experiences, feelings and coping strategies -Movement from hopelessness to hopefulness	Narrative Synthesis Thematic Synthesis
Reid 2006 [67]	Qualitative Study (+)	UK	Multi-faceted support at 5	Paid and voluntary staff and	Case studies involving semi-	Key themes;	Thematic Synthesis

Field 2007 [79]			hospices, including befriending support, formal counselling, therapeutic group	bereavement service users from 5 hospices (n not stated)	structured interviews, focus groups and documentary analysis Thematic analysis	-Bereavement counselling/ befriending programs facilitated expression of emotions, normalisation of grief process and feelings. Seen as helpful to talk to someone other than friends and family. -Befriending provides practical and social support, including 'listening ear', but are concerns over when to withdraw. -Therapeutic group helped by meeting others in similar situations and learning coping strategies	
Roberts 2008 [71]	Cross sectional survey (-)	Ireland	Volunteer listening Service (VBSS), Individual support Volunteer led	76 service user respondents to questionnaire evaluating Hospice Volunteer Bereavement Support Service (VBSS).	Open and closed questions in survey Qualitative analysis not described	Key themes; -Insight gained on the grief process, including understanding feelings as 'normal' -Clients helped to open up and express emotions and valued feeling 'listened to' -Clients valued talking to those other than friends and family and having a safe 'space' to grieve.	Thematic Synthesis
Sikkema 2004 [48] <i>Sikkema 2005</i> [78] <i>Sikkema 2006</i> [79]	RCT (+)	USA	Group Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, 12 weekly sessions [C: individual therapy on request] Group Support	268 bereaved individuals with HIV+ status	Grief (GRI); Psychiatric distress (SCL-90R); Depression (SIGH-AD). Health Related Quality of life(FAHI)	Significant between group differences were only identified on measures of psychiatric distress[36] and Health Related Quality of Life [64]	Narrative Synthesis

			Professional led				
Supiano 2017 [58]	Qualitative Study (++)	USA	Complicated Grief Group Therapy, 5 weekly sessions over 16 weeks Group support Professional led	16 bereaved dementia caregivers, 3 treatment groups	Observation of 3 Therapy Sessions in RCT Sessions coded using the 'meaning of loss codebook'	Key observations; -Over time participants demonstrated positive gains in the domain of 'moving on with life' -Participant interpretations of the death transitioned from negative to positive and positive memories started to be shared	Thematic Synthesis
Wittenberg-Lyles 2015 [50]	Uncontrolled Before and After (-) Qualitative Study (++)	USA	Closed Facebook group On-line support group Written information and guidance provided to facilitate discussion	16 bereaved hospice carers	Depression-Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) Generalized Anxiety Disorder Screening tool (GAD-7) Qualitative content analysis of on-line posts	Lower levels of anxiety and depression pre-/post-test. Not reported if these were significant. Qualitative themes: -Sharing of coping strategies, advice, storytelling -Sense of community and mutual support -Understanding feelings as normal	Narrative Synthesis Thematic Synthesis
Yopp 2013 [77]	Qualitative Study (-)	USA	Bereavement support group for widowed fathers, 7 monthly sessions Group support Professional led	6 bereaved husbands (with dependent children) at cancer centre	Focus group Analysis not described	Key themes; -Feeling understood by others in similar situations and comforted by not being alone -Understanding grief experiences as normal -Learning and sharing coping strategies, including those relating to parental competencies and concerns	Thematic Synthesis
Young 2018 [60]	Qualitative Study (++)	Canada	Music therapy, six singing sessions over three months	7 bereaved female caregivers	Semi-structured interviews	Key themes; -Enabled profound emotional expression and mutual support	Thematic Synthesis

			Group support Professional led		Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	-Facilitated emotional and spiritual connection to the deceased -Helpful opportunity for grief resolution -Some experienced discomfort, nervousness and anxiety	
--	--	--	-----------------------------------	--	--	---	--

Quality Score: ++ (Good Quality), + (Mixed Quality), - (Low Quality) [40]

Measures; AAG; Adult Attitude to Grief Scale; BDI: Beck Depression Inventory; BHS: Beck Hopelessness Scale; BSI: Brief Symptom Inventory; CGI: Complicated Grief Inventory; CESD: Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale; Grief Experience Inventory (GEI); GRI: Grief Reaction Index; FACIT-sp: spiritual wellbeing scale; FAHI: Functional Assessment of Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection; GAD-7: Generalized Anxiety Disorder Screening Tool; HAT: Helpful Aspects of Therapy; HHI: Herth Hope Index; HGRC: Hogan Grief Reaction Checklist; HSCL: Hopkins Symptom Checklist; IDWL: Inventory for Daily Widowed Life; PCMS: Pearlin Coping Mastery Scale; PSQI: Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index; PANAS: Positive and Negative Affect Scale; PHQ: Patient Health Questionnaire; POMS: Profile of Moods States; QOL-NRS: Numeric Rating Scale for Quality of Life; RCOPE: Religious Coping Scale; RSES: Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale; SAS: SCL-90R: Symptom Checklist Revised; Social Adjustment Scale; SIGH-AD: Structured Interview Guide for Hamilton Anxiety & Depression; STAI: State Trait Anxiety Inventory; SWLS: Satisfaction With Life Scale; TRIG: Texas Revised Inventory of Grief; WHOQOL-BREF: WHO Quality of Life Bref.