

Protocol for a meta-ethnographic study of the experience of loss and bereavement in  
fathers of children diagnosed with life-limiting illnesses  
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### Review question

What are fathers' experiences of loss and bereavement following a diagnosis of life-limiting condition in their children?

### Searches

An initial bibliographic search for publications will be undertaken using PubMed, PsycINFO, CINAHL and ScienceDirect up until April 2022. No temporal limits will be used. This search will be augmented with hand searches of articles cited in reference lists, from relevant review papers and through author run. For papers that are unavailable online, authors will be contacted to request copies. Search terms available from the InterTASC Information Specialists' Sub-Group Search Filter ([www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/intertasc/](http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/intertasc/)) will be used in addition to prior scoping exercises to develop the search syntax. The search strategy will include only terms related to or describing the phenomenon through the use of synonyms for "life-limiting" AND "bereavement" AND "qualitative research". The search strategy for ScienceDirect (in Journals-expert search) will be available in the published protocol.

### Types of study to be included

Published peer-reviewed qualitative studies written in English language will be included. Studies will be excluded if they fail to differentiate outcomes between mothers and fathers, use quantitative methods and do not include children with life-limiting conditions.

### Condition or domain being studied

Life limiting illnesses. The archetypes set out in the Guide to Children's Palliative Care (Together for short lives, 2018) and the directory of life-limiting conditions (Hain et al., 2013) will be used to select relevant papers.

### Participants/population

Inclusion: Fathers who experienced loss and bereavement following their child's life-limiting illness.

Exclusion criteria: Mothers or other family members.

### Intervention(s), exposure(s)

This study aims to provide an in-depth assembly of the current state of knowledge around fathers' experiences of loss and bereavement following their children's life-limiting conditions. Previous research has predominantly explored the mothers' experiences of bereavement and their emotional and psychosocial needs, either explicitly or within 'parent' or 'family' samples. Fathers are often the forgotten parent. There is an immediate call to understand fathers' experiences to inform appropriate psychosocial interventions and support channels.

### Comparator(s)/control

Not applicable

### Main outcome(s)

Fathers' experiences of loss and/or bereavement following their children's diagnosis of a life-limiting condition and/or death.

Fathers' coping strategies and emotional and psychosocial support needs following their children's diagnosis of a life-limiting condition and/or death.

#### \* Measures of effect

Not applicable

#### Additional outcome(s)

None

#### \* Measures of effect

Not applicable

#### Data extraction (selection and coding)

Search results will be collated in an Excel database and duplicates will be deleted. Titles and abstracts will be screened independently by the first and second authors. Full texts of retrieved articles will be reviewed. A priori inclusion/ exclusion criteria will be applied at this stage. Any discrepancies will be resolved by consensus. Data including study details (author, year of publication and country), participants' characteristics (number, gender and age), response rate, source of participants, method and time of data collection and children's characteristics (diagnosis, age, number and gender) will be extracted. Full replication of participants' experiences expressed in original quotations in the papers (first-order data) and authors' interpretations and conceptualisations (second-order data) will be used across the full primary studies. Data will be extracted in thematic tables. If studies report data on both parents, only findings relating to fathers' experiences of loss and bereavement will be extracted.

#### Risk of bias (quality) assessment

Quality appraisal will be conducted using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist. Studies will not be excluded on the basis of a given score, as a CASP cut-off point has not been recommended previously. This meta-ethnography will be reported according to the eMERGe reporting guidance, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) and STARLITE (Booth et al., 2006) recommendations.

#### Strategy for data synthesis

We will use Noblit and Hare's (1988) seven-stage meta-ethnographic approach. The first and second authors will thematically analyse the full list of first and second-order constructs and will organise them into categories through constant comparison to facilitate reciprocal translation. The interpretative process and the development of the conceptual analysis will be iterative and collaborative, and by reference to the original texts. This approach will help identify whether constructs correspond (reciprocal translation), contradict (refutational translation) or express different aspects of the topic (line of argument). Where authors use varied language to label the same phenomenon or experience, we will compare the constructs to identify patterns of shared meaning.

#### Analysis of subgroups or subsets

This is a qualitative synthesis and while subgroup analyses may be undertaken it is not possible to specify the groups in advance.

#### Contact details for further information

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#### Organisational affiliation of the review

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#### Review team members and their organisational affiliations

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#### Type and method of review

Synthesis of qualitative studies, Systematic review

**Anticipated or actual start date**

01 May 2021

**Anticipated completion date**

01 May 2022

**Funding sources/sponsors**

Not applicable

**Conflicts of interest**

**Language**

English

**Country**

England

**Stage of review**

Review Ongoing

**Subject index terms status**

Subject indexing assigned by CRD

**Subject index terms**

Anthropology, Cultural; Bereavement; Child; Fathers; Grief; Humans; Male

**Date of registration in PROSPERO**

28 January 2021

**Date of first submission**

25 January 2021

**Stage of review at time of this submission**

The review has not started

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Started</b>	<b>Completed</b>
Preliminary searches	No	No
Piloting of the study selection process	No	No
Formal screening of search results against eligibility criteria	No	No
Data extraction	No	No
Risk of bias (quality) assessment	No	No
Data analysis	No	No

*The record owner confirms that the information they have supplied for this submission is accurate and complete and they understand that deliberate provision of inaccurate information or omission of data may be construed as scientific misconduct.*

*The record owner confirms that they will update the status of the review when it is completed and will add publication details in due course.*

## Versions

28 January 2021

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### PROSPERO

This information has been provided by the named contact for this review. CRD has accepted this information in good faith and registered the review in PROSPERO. The registrant confirms that the information supplied for this submission is accurate and complete. CRD bears no responsibility or liability for the content of this registration record, any associated files or external websites.