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Uniformed Services University Psychiatrists Author Newly-Defined Prolonged Grief Disorder Diagnostic Handbook

Bethesda, Md. – Among those who experience a sudden and violent loss of a loved one, as many as 40 percent may struggle with Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD). To help clinicians understand and treat those suffering from this crippling condition – which is much longer-lasting and can be all-consuming compared to typical bereavement – experts from the Uniformed Services University (USU) have collaboratively published a new book, *Grief and Prolonged Grief Disorder*.

In 2022, PGD became a formal diagnosis and was published in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Diagnosis, DSM 5-TR, which defines and organizes mental health disorders. Several members of USU's Department of Psychiatry and its Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (CSTS), including Stephen J. Cozza, MD, Joscelyn E. Fisher, PhD, and Christin M. Ogle, PhD, recently co-authored several chapters of *Grief and Prolonged Grief Disorder*, the first to describe this newly-defined DSM 5-TR diagnostic criteria for PGD.

"This book serves as a comprehensive review of the state of the art in understanding grief and Prolonged Grief Disorder, which will be valuable to clinicians. It will also serve as a reminder that although grief is a common experience, it can have clinical implications," said Dr. Stephen Cozza, Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at USU, who co-edited the book. "It's also intended to provide clear and comprehensive information to clinicians who treat children, adolescents, and adults."

Grief is a normal part of the human experience, and typically, those who bereave the death of a loved one will adapt to their grief over time, Cozza said. However, some individuals will continue to struggle in ways that are consistent with this diagnosis and, therefore, would benefit from treatment for this condition.

"PGD responds to grief-specific treatments, proven effective in multiple evidence-based trials. When clinicians are able to classify PGD as such, they can then treat it as such. This is covered in the new book," Cozza added.

The book also covers topics related to normative grief and PGD, both in terms of understanding the diagnosis, the epidemiology of the condition, and evidence-based treatments for PGD. It not only speaks to grief in adulthood but also in children and adolescents, and it provides evidence-based guidelines to help support individuals through the normative grief process.

Developing this new book was an integrative process, involving a collaboration of national experts on grief and PGD from USU, along with the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, Weill Cornell Medicine, Columbia University, the New York University Grossman School of Medicine, and the University of California, San Diego. It also draws upon data collected from the National Military Family

Bereavement Study, led by CSTS, the first systematic study to examine the impact of service member death on surviving family members.

“We hope this book will be a tool for clinicians and providers, and will help to better understand and care for those who are grieving the loss of a loved one,” Cozza said.

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