A Spiritual Prescription to Bereaved Parents of Children Died Due to Coronavirus Disease 2019

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The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has severely affected millions of people including children. Unlike adults, most infected children have a milder course and appear to have better outcomes overall. Clinical spectrum of the disease ranged from asymptomatic infection to severe illness and ultimately death.¹,² Overall prevalence of death from COVID-19 was 20% (18–23%), and of those that died, 85% were aged ≥60 years.³ The mortality rate was 0.18% in hospitalized children with COVID-19.¹ The death of a child is one of the most stressful incidents that parents and siblings can experience. Interventions for bereaved families following the death of a child have been studied over the past few decades. However, there is little evidence to support any rationale for determining optimal interventions for bereaved parents and siblings.⁴ In this article, we present a spiritual prescription to support bereaved parents who have lost a child for any reason, including COVID-19 infection to draw attention to the importance of spiritual support for bereaved parents.

Facilitating the “good death,” an obvious priority of care for everyone involved with the dying child, should also be a priority for the health of bereaved families and affected health care providers.⁵ McDonald et al.⁶ analyzed the needs of parents following sudden cardiac death in young ones. They showed that parents’ perceived needs for information and support spanned the medical, psychosocial, spiritual, and financial domains. Among the evaluated support and information needs, medical needs were identified as the most important, followed by psychosocial, spiritual, and financial needs.⁵ Bousso et al.⁷ examined the relationship between religion, illness, and death in the life histories of family members of children with life-threatening diseases. They found that three dimensions of spirituality were related to illness and death in their life histories: a higher being with a healing power, development and maintenance of a connection with God, and faith encouraging optimism. The narratives demonstrated the family’s search to attribute meanings to their experiences, based on their religious beliefs.⁸ Nursi⁸ noted a condolence letter to support bereaved parents spiritually after a child’s death as follows: The child who died was the creature, possession, servant, and with all his members the artefact of the Most Compassionate Creator; he belonged to Him and was a friend of his parents, put temporarily under their supervision. The Creator made the parents the child’s servants. In return for their services, He gave them pleasurable compassion as an immediate wage. Now, if as the requirement of mercy and wisdom, the Compassionate Creator, who owns nine hundred and ninety-nine shares of the child out of a thousand, takes the child from you and puts an end to your service, to cry out in grief and despair due to that apparent single share in the face of the true owner of the thousand shares in a way that infers complaint, does not befit a believer; it befits rather the people of neglect and misguidance.⁸ In our daily practice, we have noted that many bereaved parents found material and spiritual peace and consolation with the above spiritual/religious teachings.

Hence, we conclude that bereaved parents whose children have died due to COVID-19 infection or other reasons should also be supported spiritually. For this purpose, we think that aside from psychologists, palliative care specialists, and social workers, clergymen should also be assigned to support these bereaved parents.

Conflict of Interest
None declared.

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