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EDITORIAL

Martin Newman

Over recent years we have become increasingly aware of the threat of terrorism. However, one part of the world that provides us with some hope that terrorism may be brought to an end is Northern Ireland. In this issue, Black provides us with an interesting account of some of his work dealing with the aftermath of violence in this troubled province, describing treatment for traumatic grief in the children of a Northern Ireland police officer. Also in this issue, we publish a report by Yüksel and Olgun-Özpolat, who have studied the

impact of the deaths of young adults on those close to them, and show how bereavement reactions are influenced by the circumstances of the loss. The authors point out that, in addition to the mental health issues involved, there are important social, legal and political aspects that influence recovery.

Those who do not work with children regularly may be apprehensive if asked to help a child after bereavement. It helps to be aware that young people in this situation may be depressed and this is especially of concern when a child talks about wanting to die to be with a loved one who has died. Whilst such a wish does not necessarily indicate depression, it is important to be alert to that possibility. Depression in young people may present in different ways to depression in adults. Complaints of boredom or tiredness are common. Normal sleep patterns may be disturbed, with the young person sleeping during the day and then being awake at night. There may be reluctance to go to school or, after a family bereavement, anxiety about what

might happen to other family members may lead to a refusal to go to school at all. Depression may also lead to running away from home, and even self-harm or suicide.

There are a number of ways in which children and adolescents who are depressed can be helped. For example, parents and other family members may need

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advice and support, as may schools. The role of psychological treatments and medication is still unclear, but it is important to ensure that any intervention for young people is both appropriate and accessible. In this issue, Slater describes an internet-based service for adolescents, illustrating how we can harness new technologies to extend the support we are able to offer. Evaluation of interventions is important in planning and developing resources, as Duncan, Findlayson and Wilson demonstrate in their paper, also in this issue, on hospice memorial services.

I began by mentioning terrorism. However, we should not forget the impact of natural disasters. Earthquakes, hurricanes and floods cause widespread damage and numerous deaths and disrupt the social and economic fabric. In some parts of the world, famine, disease, malnutrition, and AIDS are common causes of death. Our understanding of the impact of these losses is incomplete. Research into such disasters poses many challenges, including the need for consideration of the religious and social beliefs of those affected. As Yüksel and Olgun-Özpolat have shown, cultural and circumstantial aspects are all important when considering how to help the bereaved.