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**Cover:** children amid the ruins of their village at Thirumalivasal, Nagapattinam district, India, a few months after the 2004 tsunami. Prathap Tharyan's report on p23 describes the psychosocial impact on the local communities  
*Photo by Prathap Tharyan*

## EDITORIAL

Martin Newman

IN JULY 2005, Cruse Bereavement Care will welcome delegates from all over the world to London, for the Seventh International Conference on Grief and Bereavement in Contemporary Society. The conference will provide an excellent opportunity for colleagues from many parts of the world to meet and to share information, and will highlight new areas for research. We hope that the delegates will also have time to enjoy London, an exciting multi-cultural city.

In one sense, of course, the title of the conference is a misnomer, in that the world has many co-existing contemporary societies. We must be cautious in extending findings made in one culture or society to others. Yet findings from studies in one country or culture may provide important information for other societies, and also help inform how best to provide services and international emergency responses to disaster.

We are fortunate to have, in this issue, distinguished authors contributing articles that reflect the international importance of studies of grief and bereavement. Leila Gupta describes how children in Afghanistan have been exposed to high levels of violent events, associated with devastation of the social fabric as a result of 20 years of civil warfare. Robert Neimeyer discusses how a profound loss may shake the foundations of the assumptive world, and reconstructing meaning may be regarded as the main task of coping with such a loss. Such a view may resonate with those who have experienced severe trauma, such as the tsunami on 26 December 2004. Prathap Tharyan discusses some of the sequelae of the tsunami, and considers the importance of considering relevant cultural issues.

Whilst the forthcoming conference is about 'contemporary' society, we should not ignore lessons from the past. In her review of a recent, and much-acclaimed, London production of *Hecuba*, written almost 2,500 years ago by the Greek playwright Euripides, Dora Black describes how Hecuba seeks revenge but, ultimately, is diminished by what she does. Colin Murray Parkes' editorial, written shortly after the acts of terrorism against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (Winter 2001), seems apposite – 'Rage is the most understandable and the most dangerous reaction to violent death'.

Acts of war, destruction and disaster have occurred down the centuries. At times, those directly affected may struggle to see any sense in their lives. Yet one of the amazing aspects of the human race is that out of disaster and catastrophe can come determination, compassion, and inspiration – and the effects of these can last for thousands of years.

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