

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Concurrent Session 2E

***When Grief Gets Complicated**

*1.5 hours for Social Work CEU's will be given for this session. In Person Only

Presenters: Christine Gallo, LCSW, ACHP-SW, GC-C and Gail Carter, LCSW-R

Summary: Complicated grief describes a persistent, intense grief reaction that hinders the natural trajectory of adaptation and healing. While most individuals navigate grief on a predictable path towards this adaptation, some become "stuck" in the acute phase. Often this can be due to pre-existing circumstances or risk factors and understanding these risk factors is crucial for clinicians in allowing for proactive interventions before loss occurs, potentially mitigating some vulnerabilities upstream. Downstream, it is essential for clinicians supporting bereaved individuals to be able to differentiate normal grief from Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD), as well as distinguish PGD from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Participants will learn the key signs and evidence-based treatments for prolonged and complicated grief, understand when and how to refer clients for specialized care, and recognize common co-occurring diagnoses that can complicate both presentation and treatment. Additionally, the session will address the impact of cumulative grief on healthcare professionals, offering practical strategies to promote self-care, resilience, and sustainable practice for themselves and their colleagues.

Learning Objectives:

At the end of the learning session, participants will be able to:

- Recognize the difference between Complicated and Uncomplicated Grief.
- Identify the particular risk as well as protective factors for the development of Complicated Grief.
- Learn how knowledge of these risk factors can support clinical interventions upstream during a loved ones' advanced illness journey to mitigate future complications before loss occurs.
- Differentiate between the key diagnostic features of Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and distinguish between the scope and purpose of general grief counseling versus specialized Complicated Grief Therapy (CGT)/Prolonged Grief Disorder Therapy (PGDT).
- Identify at least two evidence-based treatment approaches for Prolonged Grief Disorder (PGD) and recognize common co-occurring diagnoses that may complicate grief presentations.
- Identify how the professional is impacted heavily by grief as well and how to implement at least two practical self-care strategies to mitigate the impact of cumulative grief and compassion fatigue, thereby promoting professional well-being and sustainable practice.

BIOs:

Christine Gallo, LCSW, ACHP-SW, GC-C is a Clinical Social Worker and Certified Grief Counselor on the Palliative Medicine Team at Peconic Bay Medical Center. Through her role, Christine has the privilege of supporting patients and their families across all facets of advanced illness and loss with a specialized meaning-centered lens and holds a specialized interest and focus on advocacy for health equity and dignified end of life care along the advanced illness journey continuum for patients with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Christine also coordinates the Palliative Medicine Team's

multi-faceted Bereavement Plan of Care utilizing holistic mind, body, and spirit multi-modal interventions to support individuals as they navigate their journey of grief. Lastly, Christine supports Peconic Bay Medical Center's Caregivers Center providing support, education and resources to the hospital's community of family caregivers.

Gail Carter, LCSW-R is a Clinical Social Worker and Hospice Bereavement Coordinator specializing in complicated, traumatic, and sudden loss. She provides individual counseling, facilitates bereavement groups and workshops, and clinically supervises bereavement staff. She collaborates with the hospice multidisciplinary team to create care plans for bereaved families and provides counseling to community clients who often experience traumatic loss, including death by murder, suicide, overdose, and loss of a child. She is trained in evidence-based treatments and incorporates mindfulness and meditation to support resilience.