The Impact of COVID-19 on Death and Mourning
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Introduction
COVID-19 effectively shook the lives of everyone it touched. Its restrictions, while up for debate, impacted everyone, including the death industry. With social distancing and crowd restrictions, death rituals around the world took a turn, and not for the better. While the rituals themselves were affected, many psychologist have become concerned about improper mourning.

Objectives/Hypothesis
The purpose of this research is to examine how COVID-19 restrictions have impacted death rituals, thus leading to improper or incomplete mourning. Mourning that can not be processed properly may lead to psychological disorders, such as Prolonged Grief Disorder, which has recently been added to the new version of the DSM-5.

I hypothesize that COVID-19 will lead to increased mental health problems, including that of Prolonged Grief Disorder.

Materials & Methods
This research was done via a literature review, thus using various articles all from scholarly sources and all accessed using Kent State University credentials.

Findings cont.
Selman et al. (2020) notes that deaths due to COVID-19, which often resulted in the loss of traditional mourning has been correlated with PGD and other poor bereavement outcomes.

Findings cont.
Jordan & Litz (2014) give the criteria for PGD, which had not been added to the DSM-5 as of their publication. The criteria includes:
• The death of a loved one.
• Clinically intense sorrow and preoccupation with the deceased 12 months after the death.
• Must meet half of the following criteria including: difficulty accepting the death and excessive avoidance of reminders.
• The bereavement is out of proportion for the cultural or traditional norms.

Image #1

Image #2

Worden’s Four Tasks of Mourning

Findings cont.
Gire (2014) cites Worden (2009) stating that there are four tasks of mourning:
• To Acknowledge the reality of the loss
• To process the pain of grief.
• To adjust to the new world without the deceased.
• To develop a new connection with the deceased while staying on a new path.
Any disruption in these tasks may lead to PGD or other poor bereavement outcomes.

Image #3

Conclusions
It is more likely than not that the restrictions put in place because of COVID-19 have lead to improper mourning. While research has not fully investigated its correlation to PGD, early studies has noticed some correlation, which should prompt further research and greater training for psychologists and counselors alike.

Implications for future work
Since early studies have already started to notice a correlation, it is important to examine this early correlation further in hopes to be prepared for the potentially rising cases of PGD. It is also important to prepare a train counselors for this potential rise in cases so that they can treat their patients effectively with the proper amount of knowledge.

References