**SYNOPSIS**

Staffs who work in hospice programs and agencies experience emotional and mental symptoms resulting from working with patients with severe illnesses that may lead to the patients’ death. The bonds the patients and the staff develop can lead to severe emotional and mental anguish when their patients pass away, especially when the patients remain in the facility for extended periods of time. The emotional and mental stress from this type of employment can lead to physical ailments, mental and emotional instability and eventually staff resignations. Providing staff with an opportunity to engage in a support group may lead to the relief of the staff’s unexpressed emotional and mental distress. The Geriatrics Department, at the Veterans Administration, plans to implement a support group for the staff working in the Hospice Program, allowing staff the opportunity to engage in debriefings at least twice a month.

Prior to the first debriefing session, the staff will voluntarily fill out a questionnaire and a consent form; the consent form will also be completed by the facilitator in order to retrieve general information from her, such as the number attending the group, the number of staff remaining during the 6 weeks of group sessions, etc. The staff will be made aware that this questionnaire is for the collection of information for a research project, only, and not for usage by the hospice program. After 6 weeks of debriefings with the support group, the same questionnaire will be presented. It will be explained, once more, that this questionnaire will be used for a research project. Because the completion of a questionnaire is voluntary, an account from the facilitator of the number of staff who actually attended will be requested in order to accurately account for the number involved in the group versus the number who actually filled out a questionnaire before and after the 6 weeks. The questions used for the questionnaire will be general and relating to mental and emotional concerns, it will not consist of any demographic identifiers, and the questions and answers will not lead to the identification of any one staff member.

This research project will be used to show the importance of support groups and the benefits derived from them, whether they are for respite workers or other employees who work directly with patients within the VA and/or the private sector.