

## Editor's Foreword

This first issue of Volume 34 of this *Journal* represents a major step forward in scholarship in the field of near-death studies. With the proliferation of online dissemination of scholarly works, those works are increasingly being identified with their own unique identification numbers—Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs)—to enhance their online accessibility to scholars worldwide. For the past year and a half, my graduate assistant in the Counseling Program at the University of North Texas, doctoral student Sahar Loseu, MS, in cooperation with the University of North Texas libraries, has undertaken the monumental project of establishing DOIs for all previous and current articles in this *Journal*. One result of this herculean effort is that previous articles will be available on the Internet at no cost—with the exception of an embargo on articles from the most recent few years that will continue to be available for purchase from the International Association for Near-Death Studies (IANDS). Another result is that, for the first time in the history of the *Journal*, in this issue DOIs will appear with their articles. This DOI project, inspired by long-time former *Journal* editor Bruce Greyson, and endorsed and supported by the IANDS Board of Directors, will give scholars around the world unprecedented access to over 30 years of scholarly inquiry into near-death experiences and related phenomena. Thus, it both enhances the scholarly stature of this *Journal* and contributes to advancement of the field of near-death studies.

Scholars advance knowledge in their fields through the dialectic between qualitative and quantitative research. Whereas qualitative research, such as finding themes from interviews and case studies, reveals a depth of information that quantitative research cannot plumb, quantitative research, such as large-scale studies involving statistically analyzed results, reveals a breadth of information that qualitative research cannot bring to account. Scholarly researchers undertake both types of inquiry using methods well established in academia. A time-honored approach to qualitative research is the case study, in which a close examination of a particular example of the phenomenon in question promises to provide unique insight into that phenomenon.

That form of scholarly inquiry comprises the theme of this issue: case studies addressing near-death phenomena.

The issue begins with a case study of the end-of-life experiences (ELEs) of a woman of Māori descent as reported retrospectively by her husband. Researchers Natasha A. Tassell-Matamua, PhD, and Kate Steadman, MA, of the School of Psychology at Massey University in New Zealand, detail each experience and then discuss how the case contributes to a deeper understanding of ELEs cross-culturally and of how health professionals can respond to the needs of the dying and those who survive them.

Next, the focus of this issue progresses from ELEs to near-death experiences (NDEs) with a case study by me and Sahar Loseu. We present the case of Howard Smith, EdD, whose unique life experience promised to shed light on a debate in the professional literature regarding the frequently-reported tunnel-and-light feature of NDEs: whether or not that feature can be reduced to physiological processes involving lack of oxygen to the brain. Until now, the debaters have drawn from the phenomenological reports of people who had experienced either physiologically induced tunnel vision or NDE-related vision of a tunnel-like structure. Smith is the only person we have encountered whose life experience included both—as well as vision of a tunnel in an after-death communication with his deceased wife. Using Smith's unique qualifications to directly compare the “tunnel vision” in the three experiences, we present new data pertaining to the adequacy of materialist explanations for visions of tunnels in transpersonal experiences.

The focus of this issue next progresses from the contents of NDEs to their aftereffects with an exploration of two cases of NDErs' spontaneous mediumship experiences (SMEs). Ryan Foster, PhD; Deborah Lee, BS; and Ann Grau Duvall, BS, all of the Department of Counseling at Marymount University, follow up on a recent article in this *Journal* in which Foster and coauthors presented results of the first quantitative study of SMEs. In an SME, an NDEr is visited uninvited by a known or unknown deceased person who asks the NDEr to convey a message to another living person who also may be known or unknown to the NDEr. True to the promise of qualitative research, their case studies provide a more nuanced appreciation of the features and issues associated with SMEs than the quantitative study could have provided. In an ironic and poignant turn of events, the second author, Reverend Lee, passed on just before their article on this death-related topic was finalized to go to press. I join Dr. Foster and Ms. Duvall in dedicating

this article to her memory—in my case with respect; in theirs with both respect and affection.

This issue closes by moving from the topic of NDE aftereffects to the topic of after-death communication with the review of a book in which the author used primarily qualitative research to explore anomalous telephone experiences, primarily telephone calls from the dead. Reviewer Eric W. Price, MA, MS, a doctoral student in the Counseling Program at the University of North Texas, found that the author, Callum E. Cooper, brought together previous findings with his own to provide a rich treatment of the subject that, in Price's opinion, reflected both enthusiasm and objectivity. As if with the perfect ending of this issue focused on case studies, Price alluded to his own experience involving a seeming telephone call from the dead and the challenges of documenting cases of this type in a way that meets scholarly academic standards for good qualitative research.

All told, this issue brings together the “big picture” scholarly achievement of DOIs for *Journal* articles with the more intimate nature of qualitative case studies that can provide for more essentially satisfying reading than is typical of quantitative research. I invite readers to join me in celebrating the unique satisfactions of each of these aspects of this issue.

Janice Miner Holden, EdD  
Editor  
*University of North Texas*  
Jan.Holden@unt.edu