

# Correspondence: do not overlook parental grief following an infant death in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

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*“Grieving parents following a perinatal death should be supported not only physically, but also psychosocially and spiritually by health professionals.”*

## Keywords

Grief, parents, death, infant.

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**Dear Editor,**

Parents' bereavement results in high rates of psychological, emotional, physiological, and existential distress after the death of a child during pregnancy, at delivery or in the neonatal period [1]. Parental grief following an infant's death is usually neglected or overlooked in many Neonatal Intensive Care Units in both developed and developing countries. Herein, we report our observations about grieving parents in order to increase the awareness of health professionals regarding the importance of grief for the death of their infant.

Boyden et al. [2] found the followings about the experiences of parents following perinatal or pediatric death: health consequences of grief; coping strategies; factors that added to the burden of loss; and emotional response to loss. Harrigan et al. [3] reported anxiety, depression and alterations in activities of daily living in parents after the loss of an infant. Parental responses were also complex and variable. Camacho Ávila et al. [4] identified two subjects related to support of parents after stillbirth and neonatal death: effects of social support in parental grief and care professional approach in dealing with parents' grief. In the study of Harrigan et al. [3], the most frequent and effective strategies were confrontation, self-reliance, and supportive coping. Parents' involvement is necessary and useful in the perinatal mortality review process. Parental engagement, bereavement care leader requirement, opportunity to conduct a formal follow-up of bereaved families, training and support to staff in order to sustain parents, planning meetings for epicrisis of perinatal death were themes emerged by healthcare professionals [5]. In our hospital, we note that all parents were psychosocially, physically, and/or spiritually affected with different degrees due to the loss of their infants. However, the parents, believing the following religious teachings, have experienced less distress: the children of believers who die before reaching maturity will remain perpetually

as eternal, lovable children in a form worthy of Paradise; they will be an everlasting source of happiness in the embrace of their fathers and mothers who go to Paradise; they will ensure that their parents receive the sweetest of pleasures, the loving and caressing of children; all pleasurable things will be found in Paradise [6].

In conclusion, in this report, we would like to emphasize that grieving parents following a perinatal death should be supported not only physically, but also psychosocially and spiritually by health professionals.

**Declaration of interest**

The Author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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