

BOOK REVIEW

Perinatal Loss: A Handbook for Working with Women and Their Families

Sheila Broderick, Ruth Cochrane. Milton Keynes, UK: Radcliffe Publishing, 2012. ISBN-13: 978-1-846-19980-6. Price: £24.99. Pages: 168 (paperback)

Those of you who regularly read my Consumer Correspondent column in this Journal will know that I am a vociferous advocate for medical treatments being paired with, and so underpinned by, emotional support. Rarely, perhaps, is this underpinning more necessary than when the medical procedures of labour and aftercare are set in the context of the baby having died.

It was therefore with some trepidation that I approached the task of reviewing the above-named book. Would it only deal with the medical aspects of perinatal loss, leaving huge

gaps in its coverage of the necessary emotional support? Or would it deal with the emotional needs of the patient but fail to do so in a way that honoured the medical practicalities?

I needn't have worried. *Perinatal Loss* – written by an obstetrician/gynaecologist and a counsellor, both of whom have worked extensively in the field – is a model of how to teach best-practice support skills in a medical setting.

The 14 chapters begin with an overview of loss and grief, then move through coverage of the kinds of support needed not only by patients but also by staff. We are taken step by step through the process, from breaking the news to parents, through labour and delivery, post-mortem and funeral arrangements to the long-term effects of grief and to the decision to once again become pregnant.

At each stage, the advice and guidance is rooted in the authors' experience and – while surprisingly not including detailed case histories – nevertheless successfully allows the reader to fully understand not only the pain of the patient and family but the challenges to the supporting medical staff.

Because of which – be warned – this is an emotionally challenging read. The chapter on post-death goodbyes between parents and child goes into such detail that this reader/reviewer at least was reduced to tears. But however painful, this is a book that should be read by any health professional – whether frontline on the labour ward or aftercare in the GP practice – whose patients have suffered a perinatal death.

For what the book offers are not only detailed, practical strategies for patient support, not only sound suggestions for professional resilience, but also that rare thing: guidance for personal change. Read this book and I challenge you not to come away even more motivated to help and even more capable of delivering that help.

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J Fam Plann Reprod Health Care 2013;**39**:299.
doi:10.1136/jfprhc-2013-100711