



Bereavement Care in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

**(面對初生嬰兒的死亡，
我們可以做什麼?)**

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Strategy of bereavement care:

Before death -

- ✦ Prepare the parents to face their baby's impending death as far as possible**
- ✦ Pay attention to critically ill babies and their parents**
- ✦ Establish a good rapport with the parents at the very beginning is essential to the bereavement support provided**

Strategy of bereavement care:

- ✧ Grasp every possible chance to take nice photos for the babies
- ✧ Try the best effort to let parents have more chances to participate in the babies care

We believe:

✦ Parents who are psychologically prepared for the baby's death may cope better when it really happens.

Bereavement support is given:

- ✦ In a team approach.
- ✦ The team includes a case manager (a nurse of the bereavement team), the case MO, the primary nurse, the chaplain, and social worker if necessary.

How to start the bereavement support?

- ✿ A consensus in the treatment goal within the team achieved**
- ✿ Interview parents by the case MO and the case manager or the primary nurse.**
- ✿ The baby's condition and response to the treatment will be explained in details to the parents.**

Focus of the interview

- ✦ **The baby's deterioration**
- ✦ **What else can we offer?**
- ✦ **Any further aggressive treatments will benefit?**
- ✦ **Palliative Care?**

The interviews

✿ It may need several interviews to prime the parents about the bad news

✿ The most important things to reassure the parents are:

“Palliative care \neq being abandoned”

“Incurable disease \neq nothing more we can offer”

After the interviews

- ✦ Give chances to let parents ventilate their feelings
- ✦ Active listening – do the parents understand their baby's condition? Accept? Denial? Or just to maintain hope as a 'good parent' should?
- ✦ Offer help whenever possible

After the interviews

- ✧ Be patient to their repeated questions
- ✧ Always give them consistent answers
- ✧ Help them to plan what they want to do for the baby when he/she is still alive
- ✧ Let the parents fulfill their parent role
- ✧ Try to create memorable moments for the family

Discussion :

- ✧ How can the parents fulfill their parents' role in a NICU setting?
- ✧ What do you think the parents or we can do to create memorable moments for the family?

Caring approach

- ✦ Care with empathy, genuineness, and caring attitude**
- ✦ Non-judgemental**
- ✦ Be careful not to overwhelm the parents with our passion to “deliver bereavement care”**

At the last moments:

- ✦ Try to inform parents timely
- ✦ Explain the baby's conditions to the parents on their arrival
- ✦ Provide privacy – preferable a quiet room
- ✦ Prepare the environment e.g. comfortable seats, warm water, and tissue

At the last moments:

- ✦ Let the parents hold and accompany their baby in his/her last journey
- ✦ Inform other family members?
- ✦ Mute the alarms
- ✦ Accompany the parents if they need
- ✦ May ask help from the chaplain

At the last moments:

✦ Encourage the parents to say their last words to their baby

e.g. How much do they love ?

What do they want to thank him?

What do they want to say sorry to him?

✦ Ask them for anything they wish to do for the baby

At the last moments:

- ✖ Listen to them if they want to talk
- ✖ Allow private time for the family union
- ✖ Ask doctor to certify death when it is appropriate
- ✖ After certifying death, remove all tubings and cover all wounds or IV access sites

At the last moments:

✦ Offer the parents choices:

✦ The baby's clothing

✦ Bath and dress the baby by themselves?

✦ Take photos? The baby alone or with the family members?

✦ Cut a lock of hair?

✦

At the last moments:

- ✦ **After tidying and dressing the baby, provide a quiet place and allow adequate time for the family members to stay, to grieve and to settle.**
- ✦ **Keeping the baby a nice and peaceful appearance is one of the most important things that can help to soothe the parents pain.**

At the last moments:

Before the parents leave –

- ✖ Do not hurry them**
- ✖ Briefly explain the aftermath to the parents and get their contact phone no.**
- ✖ Make an appointment to see them in the following working day**

At the last moments:

- ✖ Give the information packet
- ✖ Let them have enough time to think about the options of:
 - ✖ having a funeral for the baby or surrender his/her body to the Government?
 - ✖ postmortem or not

Interview after the baby died:

- ✦ Explain the whole process of the baby's hospitalization by the name doctor
- ✦ Clarify anything that the parents do not understand or are clear
- ✦ Discuss about the need for post-mortem
- ✦ Referral letter to O&G doctor for the next pregnancy if this baby has some congenital abnormality

Interview after the baby died:

- ✦ Explain the aftermath of the baby by the nurse (case manager) e.g. the procedure of death registration or surrendering the body, the funeral arrangement, prepare the relevant documents, obtain the verbal consent for the telephone follow-up contact**

Managing Sudden Death (Sudden deterioration / an emergent admission)

- ❖ **An honest, sincere and empathetic attitude can help them to have trust in you.**
- ❖ **In case of a sudden deterioration, inform parents immediately**

Managing Sudden Death (Sudden deterioration / an emergent admission)

- ✖ **The nurse in-charge should greet the parents immediately on their arrival and settle them in a quiet place**
- ✖ **Explain the situation to them concisely**
- ✖ **Keep the parents informed periodically about the progress no matter the resuscitation is successful or not**

Managing Sudden Death (Sudden deterioration / an emergent admission)

- ✦ Ask the doctor to talk to the parents as soon as they are available**
- ✦ Be prepared ourselves to face the intense emotions of the parents**
- ✦ Be aware of our own feelings**
- ✦ Don't take the parents' anger personally**

Managing Sudden Death (Sudden deterioration / an emergent admission)

- ✦ **May need help from the chaplain or clinical psychologist if the parents are emotionally uncontrolled**
- ✦ **Handle these parents with extra sensitivity**
- ✦ **Be compassionate is the best way to face with these parents**

Key points to remember:

- ✖ **Be empathic**
- ✖ **Try to establish a good rapport with the parents**
- ✖ **Prepare the parents for the baby's death as far as possible**
- ✖ **Help the parents to fulfill their parents' role and wishes**

Key points to remember:

- ✖ Try the best effort to create memorable moments for the parents
- ✖ Respect and non-judgemental
- ✖ Active listening
- ✖ Patient's death \neq our failure
- ✖ No matter how good we do \neq we can take away the parents' suffering

Key points to remember:

✦ To maintain a nice appearance of the deceased is to:

✦ Keep the baby's dignity

✦ Show our respect

✦ The least comfort we can give to the bereaved family

Key points to remember:

✿ We have the privilege to support the parents because :

✿ We are the people who know the baby personally

✿ We have the shared memories of the baby with the parents

✿ We can help the parents to figure out the whole picture of the baby if we are willing to do so