Starting a Hospital Perinatal Bereavement Program

Presented by
Karmel McCarthy Riches, MAOM, BSN, RN
Ilyse Richman, BSN, RNC
“Bereaved parents never forget the understanding, respect, and genuine warmth they received from caregivers, which can become as lasting and important as any other memories of their lost pregnancy or their baby’s brief life.”

-I.G. Leon
Objectives

• Learner will be able to identify at least 5 disciplines that make up a perinatal bereavement team
• Learner will be able to list at least three resources for grief support materials
• Learner will be able to describe a “Butterfly Preparation Room”
• Learner will be able to discover the significance of a hospital based fetal demise case review
Why is this important?

- Through the Fetal Infant Mortality Review (Healthy Mother’s Healthy Babies) we know that grieving families are not receiving consistent bereavement support throughout Broward county.
- Support varies greatly from hospital to hospital.
- It is crucial that all 8 delivering Broward County hospitals have perinatal bereavement teams and offer consistent grief support to Broward County families.
Pillars of Support Systems

- Hospital Administrators, Directors and Managers
- Lactation Services...lactation after loss and milk donation
- Hospital Social Workers...not only for patients but for staff
- Spiritual Support
- Family Advisors
- Physicians
- Community Leaders/Organizations
Planning Committee

- Nursing representatives from labor and delivery, post partum, nursery, neonatal intensive care, pediatrics, emergency, medical/surgical, surgical services
- OB/Midwives
- Neonatologists
- Pediatricians
- Social Work
- Pastoral Care
- Bereaved family member
- Patient and Family Centered Care Advisors
- Community Support/Organizations
Team Set Up

- Looking for people who are going to honor their commitment to being part of the team
- Implementation of chair, co-chair and secretary
- Will need to meet every two weeks in the beginning of team set up, then eventually can decrease frequency
- Importance of assigned tasks and follow ups
Team Roles

• Very important that team members are held accountable for their assigned tasks
• All of the work cannot fall upon the chair and co-chair
• If team member cannot honor their commitment then they need to find replacement for their role
Nursing Model of Care Grounded in Caring

Perinatal Bereavement Team and Model of Care
Providing Support, True Presence and Education to Families and Healthcare Professionals

Karmel McCarthy-Riches, MAOM, BSN, RN
Ilyse Richman, BSN, RNC
A mission statement defines in a paragraph or so any entity's reason for existence. It embodies its philosophies, goals, ambitions and mores. Any entity that attempts to operate without a mission statement runs the risk of wandering through the world without having the ability to verify that it is on its intended course.
The perinatal bereavement team at Memorial Hospital Miramar provides patience, honesty, hope, support and education to individuals and families who are grieving because of a fetal, neonatal or infant loss. Our mission is to help people trust in us, build their courage, cope with their loss, support their healing and nurture their physical and emotional well being. Our mission will be upheld through embracing humility, validating knowing and communicating alternating rhythms.
A Vision Statement: Defines the optimal desired future state - the mental picture - of what an organization wants to achieve over time; Provides guidance and inspiration as to what an organization is focused on achieving in five, ten, or more years.
Memorial Hospital Miramar
Vision Statement

**Vision Statement**: The purpose of our Perinatal Bereavement team is to provide support, true presence, caring and education to individuals and families who have suffered a fetal, neonatal or infant loss.
Education of Staff

- Staff is going to provide direct grief counseling along with social workers
- Sensitivity trainings for physicians and all other hospital staff: should be a part of hospital orientation
- Unit based nursing competencies
Resources for Staff

- Team should develop a resource binder/tool that is available at each nurses station
- Should contain simplified instructions for step by step what to do when a family has suffered a loss
- Review and examples of paperwork (Computer Program)
- Include information about funeral homes
- Photography
Funding for the Team

• There are costs involved with running a perinatal bereavement team
• Look to the hospital to provide funding
• If the hospital is unable to provide funding, look to your hospital auxiliary, your local not for profits
• Host fundraisers: bake sales, flower sales, etc.
• Community donations
Materials for Families

- Parents often searching for answers following a loss
- Written materials give them something to hold
- Appropriate language
- Mother, father, siblings, grandparents, friends, co-workers
Support Materials and Mementos

Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies

Foot Prints, Lock of Hair, Blankets
Materials for Families

- Decide as a nursing unit, where family support materials will be housed
- Who will be responsible on team for reordering materials so that you do not run out and what is your annual budget?
- Make sure you are giving the appropriate written materials to a family
The Symbol of the Butterfly

Place on Patient's Door
Butterfly Preparation Room
Butterfly Preparation Room

- Supplies located in one area
- Organized
- Step by Step Instructions
- Bathing
- Photography
- Clothing
Memory Boxes or Pouches

- Memory boxes are cherished by parents
- Holds the tangible memories of their baby
- Can be purchased
- Can make your own
- Should be kept for up to one year after loss by hospital if family does not initially want to take home
Supplies, Educational Material, Support Materials

Mementos

Photography
Photography

Photography Cube

Photography Cube
Photography and Props
Clothing

- Parents may not always have clothing for the baby
- Have your volunteers sew or knit clothing, hats and booties for the babies
- Grandmothers who have lost a grandchild are a wonderful resource
Clothing

Varying Sizes

Stretch Swaddling Wraps
Memorial Hospital Miramar Clinical Ladder Committee
Donates Wedding Gowns and Communion Gowns

The fabric is used for the
MHM Perinatal Bereavement Angel Gown Program

Wedding Gowns

1995

Communion Gowns

Completed Angel Gown with
Matching Pouch and Bonnet

1997

The gowns are made with love
by hospital advisors and volunteers
Hospital Memorials

- Your team can facilitate the development of a hospital memorial for the babies that have been lost
- Tree plantings, serenity garden, memorial walk, balloon release
- Inviting all families that have suffered a loss to participate
Bereavement Rooms

• Butterfly Rooms
• Rooms that provide families privacy, quiet and serenity to be able to spend as much time with their baby as they need to
• Bed, sofa, chairs, crib for baby
Support Groups

• Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies of Broward facilitates the “Healing your Heart” support groups that are held twice monthly
• Some families prefer to participate in online support groups
• Peer support
• One on one support is available through Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies of Broward
Support Groups

• Important to provide parents a list of local and national support groups at the time of discharge
• Once your team is up and running, considering hosting your own monthly support group...Memorial Hospital West
• Can be for couples, or moms only, or dads only, grandparents only, etc.
Forget Me Not Event

- Annual memorial event hosted by Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies of Broward
- Honors all babies that have been lost
- Free
- Teams should participate, attend, invite their patients that have suffered losses
Follow Up

• Assigned team member should be doing follow up phone calls with all families that have suffered a loss for one year, unless family declines
• Keep a log of all family contact and calendar of when families need to be called
Challenges

- Staff resistance: uncomfortable with infant death, personal beliefs, “too much time”
- Staff resistance to allowing families to keep baby in room as long as they want to
- Funding for materials
- Doctors who have had NO bereavement training
- Culture change
Overcoming Challenges

• Ongoing staff support, education, updates
• Seek creative ways to find funding
• Reach out to your local maternal child health agencies for support: education of staff, support for families, etc.
• Offer positive reinforcement to staff and team
• Have a bereaved family speak directly to staff: the power of their message can facilitate change on how staff sees their role
Summary

- Assess the needs of your hospital
- Know the population you serve
- Team recruitment
- Assignment of roles/tasks
- Education of staff
- Roll out of program
- Ongoing follow up with families
- Ongoing self evaluation of your team
- Case Review/De-Brief
Questions are guaranteed in life; Answers aren't.
Thank You!