

## RCM Clinical guidance briefing: Maternity bereavement care during Covid-19

## **Topic**

#### **Bereavement Care in Maternity Services During Covid-19 Epidemic**

## Potential impact of Covid-19 in this topic area

The tragedy of pregnancy loss will sadly continue through the pandemic and women and families will need access to high quality care

- Families may receive care from someone inexperienced in bereavement care provision
- Families are isolated or distant from their wider networks of support such as family and friends
- Access to services such as funerals may be prolonged due to resource and demand
- Families may be anxious as to the cause of their loss
- Access to peer support is limited or absent, for both Health Professionals and families

## Current key guidance for this topic – clinical care and advice for women

- Supporting parents and families can be stressful and demanding **following** a pregnancy loss or when a baby dies. These reasons will be individual and may include staff having to manage their own emotions following their own experience(s) of loss; a feeling of professional failure following a baby death and anxiety caused by wanting to 'get it right' knowing this is a difficult time for parents.
- Pregnant women do not appear more likely to contract the infection than the general population. Pregnancy itself alters the body's immune system and response to viral infections in general, which can occasionally be related to more severe symptoms and this will be the same for COVID-19.

With regard to vertical transmission (transmission from mother to baby antenatally or intrapartum), emerging evidence now suggests that vertical transmission is thought to be probable, although the proportion of pregnancies affected and the significance to the neonate has yet to be determined. Previous case reports from China suggested that there was no evidence for this and amniotic fluid, cord blood, neonatal throat swabs, placenta swabs, genital fluid and breastmilk samples from COVID-19 infected mothers have so far, all tested negative for the virus. A new report published on Thursday 26 March 2020 describes a single maternal-neonatal pair in which the infant born to a COVID-19 positive mother was found to have SARS-COV-2 IgM in serum at birth. Since IgM does not cross the placenta, this is likely to represent a neonatal immune response to in utero infection.

#### https://www.rcm.org.uk/media/3824/2020-03-28-covid19-pregnancy-guidance.pdf

#### **Current Evidence base**

Stage	Туре	Link	
Caring for	e-learning	http://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/information/for-health-	
women		professionals/e-learning	
experiencing			
early loss			
Miscarriage	webpage	https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/information/for-health-	
association		professionals/guidance-miscarriages-occur-home/	

Ectopic and Molar Pregnancy Pregnancy Resources  Marking loss, making memories  After the download https://www.bliss.org.uk/ loss: https://www.sands.org.uk/ https://www.sands.org.uk/ https://twinstrust.org/bereavement/support/resources.html  video Parent to Parent Post Mortem Authorisation  video Talking to parents about their decisions around burial or cremation after the death of their baby  webpage https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/information/for-health-professionals/certification/ https://www.healthliteracyplace.org.uk/tools-and-techniques/te	Miscarriage,	webpage	https://www.nbcpscotland.org.uk/miscarriage/training-and-support/		
Molar Pregnancy Resources         www.nbcpscotland.org.uk/miscarriage/resources           Marking loss, making memories         webpage/video         https://futurehealthandwellbeing.org/ritualrespect           After the loss: certificates, post mortem, cremation         download https://www.bliss.org.uk/ https://www.sands.org.uk/ https://twinstrust.org/bereavement/support/resources.html           video         Parent to Parent Post Mortem Authorisation           Talking to parents about their decisions around burial or cremation after the death of their baby           webpage         https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/information/for-health- professionals/certification/ techniques/techniques/teach-back           SANDS – National Bereavement Care Pathways         webpage         https://www.nbcpscotland.org.uk/           NBCP         eLfH https://portal.e-         Bereavement care after pregnancy loss – learning for all Bereavement care after pregnancy loss – for health professionals	•	Wespage	incepsiff www.incepsectional.org.an/imsearriage/training and support		
Pregnancy Resources  Marking loss, making memories  After the loss:     certificates, post mortem, cremation  Video  Video  Video  Video  Parent to Parent Post Mortem Authorisation  Talking to parents about their decisions around burial or cremation after the death of their baby  webpage  https://www.nbcpscotland.org.uk/ https://www.healthliteracyplace.org.uk/tools-and-techniques/techniques/teach-back  SANDS – National  Bereavement Care Pathways  NBCP  eLfH https://portal.e-  Mebpage  https://portal.e-  https://portal.e-  Bereavement care after pregnancy loss – learning for all Bereavement care after pregnancy loss – for health professionals	•		www.nhcnscotland.org.uk/miscarriage/resources		
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# References and links to online and virtual support and guidance

Title	Туре	Link
ARC advice for professionals	Webpage	www.arc-uk.org/for-professionals
Bereavement following	e-learning	www.knowledge.scot.nhs.uk/maternalhealth/learning/bereavement-
Pregnancy Loss and the Death		<u>following-pregnancy.aspx</u>
of a Baby		
Sands advice for professionals	webpage	www.sands.org.uk/professionals
Ambulance crews	Video	https://youtu.be/iU1qtt09qho
Antenatal and postnatal	webpage	https://www.bestbeginnings.org.uk/helping-parents-with-mental-
mental health		health-issues
NICE guidance ante natal and	webpage	https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs115
postnatal mental health		
One chance to get it right:	e-learning	https://www.ilearn.rcm.org.uk/enrol/index.php?id=583
bereavement care		(RCM members only)
Miscarriage Association advice	webpage	https://www.miscarriageassociation.org.uk/information/for-health-
for professionals		professionals/
Tommy's	webpage	https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy-information/about-
		us/tommys-midwife-alexa-and-google-home-app-pregnancy-
		questions