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Mental Health and the Early Loss of a Pregnancy (M-HELP): an intervention to support bereaved parents and their health care providers through the loss



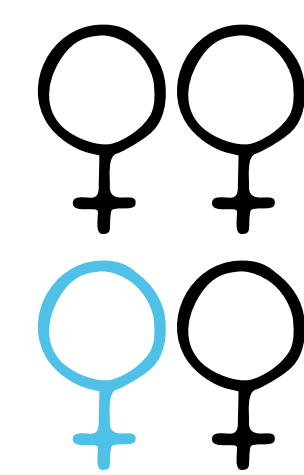
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Background

In Australia, miscarriage/early pregnancy loss is defined as an unintended pregnancy loss before 20 weeks of gestation [1].



Up to one in four known pregnancies end in miscarriage, which translates to approximately 147,000 miscarriages annually in Australia [2].

Research has shown that patients frequently experience significant psychological distress, trauma and grief as a result of this type of pregnancy loss, which can last weeks, months or even years [3]. Clinically significant depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder are also not uncommon [4].

Unfortunately, because of the high frequency of early pregnancy loss and the silence and stigma around it [5], the resulting adverse mental health effects for both patients and partners are often overlooked or unacknowledged by family, friends and healthcare providers. Importantly, patients and partners who report satisfaction with their care following early pregnancy loss are less likely to experience depression, anxiety, and perinatal grief [6].

Study Aims

The aim of M-HELP is to (1) identify the emotional support needs of patients and their partners who experience early pregnancy loss in a private hospital setting, and (2) identify any training needs of staff members who provide care for early pregnancy loss. These findings will be used:



To improve the emotional wellbeing of patients and partners who experience early pregnancy loss



To empower & support the staff members who provide early pregnancy loss care

Findings

Main overlapping support needs of Patients & Partners:

- ① Acknowledgement of emotional impact of the loss for the patient
- ② Acknowledgement for the partner as someone who is both grieving as well as a support for the patient
- ③ Privacy
- ④ Written information

Additional training needs 71% of staff indicated **additional training needs** in the provision of early pregnancy loss care – particularly with **emotional support care**.

71%

Written information Patient perspective 100% of patients & partners expressed that **written information would be helpful** to supplement current early pregnancy loss care.

100%

Written information Staff perspective 91% of staff thought written information would be a **useful addition to their early pregnancy loss care**.

91%

The acceptability & effectiveness of these resources will be evaluated through two intervention studies.

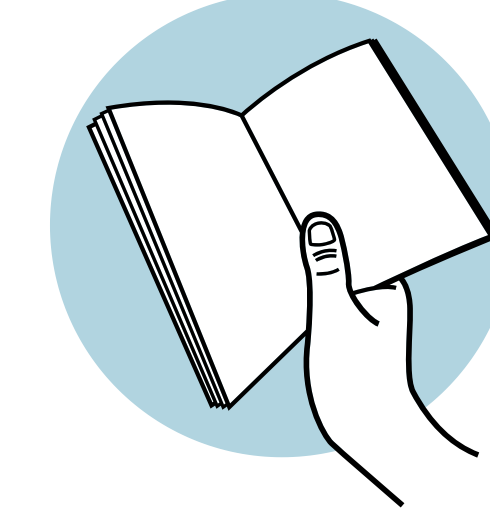
Next Steps

Based on the identified needs of patients, partners & staff, **two resources** are currently being created:

1 **Staff Training Tool**



2 **Patient & Partner Support Booklet**



Study Design

A total of 48 interviews were completed.

Research Setting:
Private Maternity Hospital

24 clients	24 staff
19 patients	7 obstetricians
6 partners	7 midwives
	4 nurses
	4 receptionists
	2 anaesthetists

We asked staff about their experiences and training needs.

We asked patients and partners about their experiences and their needs around care.

The data were analysed thematically.

References

- [1] Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG). Pregnancy Loss.; 2021
- [2] Center of Perinatal Excellence. Coping with Perinatal Loss. <https://www.cope.org.au/planning-a-family/pregnancy-loss/>
- [3] Frost M, Condon JT. The Psychological Sequelae of Miscarriage: A Critical Review of the Literature. Aust New Zeal J Psychiatry. 1996; 30(1):54-62. doi:10.3109/00048679609076072
- [4] Lok IH, Neugebauer R. Psychological morbidity following miscarriage. Best Pract Res Clin Obstet Gynaecol. 2007;21(2):229-247. doi:10.1016/j.bpobgyn.2006.11.007
- [5] Bardos J, Hercz D, Friedenthal J, Missmer SA, Williams Z. A National Survey on Public Perceptions of Miscarriage. Obstet Gynecol. 2015;125(6):1313-1320. doi:10.1097/AOG.0000000000000859

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[6] Lee, L., Ma, W., Davies, S., and Kammers, M. (2022). Towards optimal emotional care during the experience of miscarriage: An Integrative Review of the perspectives of women, partners and healthcare providers. [InPress] Journal of Midwifery & Women's Health.

