

Influence of Stillbirth Deliveries on Staff in Maternity Hospitals

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Introduction. The definition of stillbirth baby is a baby born with no signs of life at or after 22 weeks of gestation. There are an estimated 2.6 million stillbirths each year worldwide, and it is undoubtedly associated with social and economic determinants of health. Cases of stillbirth deliveries are recognized as one of the most emotionally and professionally challenging experiences for medical staff. Maternity staff finds caring for bereaved families stressful and emotionally challenging, with many experiencing difficulty with this area of practice, feeling unprepared due to a lack of support and training.

Aim, Materials and Methods. Surveys, including open and closed questions about the challenges of working with patients in case of stillbirth deliveries, were organized in the two biggest Maternity hospitals in Latvia – Rīga Maternity Hospital and Pauls Stradins Clinical University Hospital Perinatal Care Center. Special questionnaires were completed by healthcare professionals working in Maternity units – obstetricians and midwives. Quantitative data was analysed descriptively using SPSS software. The study was accepted by The Ethics Committee of Rīga Stradiņš University.

Results. A total number of 106 responses were analyzed. Population consisted of 103 women and 3 men. The most frequent age for respondents was 50–59 years (23.8 % of the respondents), less frequent 20–29 years (22.9 %) and 40–49 years (21.9 %). 66 % of the staff were midwives and 34 % obstetricians. 75.2 % of them were certified specialists, but 24.8 % were in educational process. For 30 % of the staff work experience was less than 5 years; for 19 % it was 10–19 years and for 18 % of them it was 30–39 years. Describing their experience with patients in cases of stillbirth 2.9 % mentioned that it is not different from other occasions in praxis, 15.7 % mentioned that there is confusion and embarrassment, 70.6 % mentioned that these cases require more time and energy, 47.1 % mentioned that it is a huge challenge professionally and emotionally, 7.8 % mentioned other experience. 30.4 % of staff agreed that there have been times when they avoided contact with these patients, while 69.6 % said they have not avoided contact with these patients. To the question if working with such patients affected their ability to carry out other duties on other patients care, 52.0 % answered positively, 48.0 % answered negatively.

Conclusions. Cases of stillbirth deliveries influence staff working abilities in many ways. Usually these cases require more time and energy and sometimes they are huge challenges professionally and emotionally. Although most of the maternity staff have not avoided contact with these patients, for some of them it is hard to find the right words how to communicate with patients. More than half confirmed that working with such patients affected their ability to carry out other duties on other patients' care.