

More support needed for mums after perinatal loss

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While existing services are highly valued, more are needed. Credit: University of Queensland

More support services for pregnant women who have previously suffered miscarriage, stillbirth or the loss of a newborn are needed, according to University of Queensland researchers.

A study led by the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences evaluated the effectiveness of a pregnancy-after-loss clinic – a hospital-based service that provides psychological support and coordinated care to women having another baby.

Researcher Grace Branjerdporn said 10 mothers who attended a public midwifery-based loss clinic in a Brisbane hospital were interviewed and, while existing services were highly valued, more were needed.

"Previous perinatal loss is absolutely devastating for the women and families involved, with the grief experienced often being felt during the next pregnancy," Ms Branjerdporn said.

"In the next pregnancy there can be heightened emotions such as anxiety, fear and hypervigilance, and a range of long-term implications.

"Our research indicates that the clinic was successful in supporting women during this critical time.

"There were only a few hospitals in Australia with such a clinic, and evidence showed that these services should be expanded."

A multidisciplinary team of registrar, sonographer, midwives, counsellor and consultant obstetrician provided collaborative emotional and clinical care tailored to the specific antenatal and birthing needs of the women.

"The mothers we spoke to had overwhelmingly positive experiences," Ms Branjerdporn said.

"They preferred consistent caregivers familiar with their prior experiences, plans and birthing decisions, as this diminished their distress and improved feelings of security.

"Feedback from the mothers included being thankful for support over their subsequent pregnancy anxieties, and gratitude for having a team that knew their background.

"A number of the [women](#) recommended that new pregnancy-after-loss

clinics be developed in other locations, perhaps even making it a standard service in all hospitals."

The research team is now following the mothers and children to evaluate long-term outcomes for the families, with particular emphasis on the [mothers'](#) well-being and sense of attachment with their child, and on the child's later development.

The study was published in BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth.

More information: Pamela Meredith et al. "Not just a normal mum": a qualitative investigation of a support service for women who are pregnant subsequent to perinatal loss, *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* (2017). [DOI: 10.1186/s12884-016-1200-9](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-016-1200-9)

Provided by University of Queensland

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