Free app helps providers treat patients grieving pregnancy loss, newborn death

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A group of University of Louisville researchers and engineers has developed a free mobile app designed to help health care providers easily assess and identify women in need of mental health care for intense grief after a pregnancy loss or death of a newborn.

Marianne Hutti, Ph.D., A.P.R.N., UofL School of Nursing professor, led research and development of the app, which makes scoring of the Perinatal Grief Intensity Scale (PGIS) easier, predicting patients at greatest risk for intense grief after perinatal loss, which includes miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of an infant within 28 days after birth.

The project was funded by a $10,000 grant through the Kimberly-Clark Nursing Research Award from the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses.

Health care providers use the app to ask a short series of questions related to how a woman perceives her perinatal loss. Based on responses, the app calculates a patient's score on the PGIS and gives providers theoretically based suggestions for care.

The app predicts patients most likely to have clinical-level anxiety, depression and continuing intense grief three to five months after a perinatal loss. Providers are encouraged to use the PGIS as a post-hospitalization screening tool to identify women who should be referred for additional mental health evaluation.

Knowing how patients perceived their pregnancy and a subsequent loss is crucial. Responses to perinatal loss vary among women and the point during pregnancy when a loss occurs does not determine a patient's grief response, Hutti said.

"Women with early losses can have very intense grief, just like women with later losses," Hutti said. "The app ensures that health care providers are creating treatment plans that are congruent with how a woman is seeing her loss because some women grieve and other women don't grieve, or will have a significantly less intense grief response than others."

Patients can choose to have their results anonymously submitted to a database, allowing for further research.

The app is available to clinicians free at uoflnursingpgis.org and Google Play.

Provided by University of Louisville