

Forever Angels



Hello Everyone,

There is a situation which warrants some discussion. What is it with some healthcare professionals who, while Mom is pregnant and for follow-up after birth, encourage appointments, answer question, and yet if there is a loss by or at delivery after the initial one or two postnatal visits - nadda? Yet again I've heard from a Mom who, 4 months after the birth of her survivor, has no word on lab test results in spite of several calls to her doctor's office for status reports. She is afraid to call again because the staff has become cool and abrupt. Other Moms have reported "my doctor's office no longer returns my calls", "It's been a year since the autopsy and I still don't have any results. I've had to hire a social worker to follow up on the results because I am so overwhelmed with grief and anger, I can't function." And from another Mom, "I know the office dreads my call."

Think of the parents' position. They are trying to deal with a survivor(s) [and perhaps other children as well], come to terms with and grieve the death of a child and hopefully learn why their baby died. After repeated attempts to get information, it's true some may not be in good form. Understanding where they are coming from and the desperate need to learn what happened to their child needs to be a given from a doctor's office. It can feel as if you want to shout into the phone: *"You're doggone right I'm emotional! My baby died and your office indicated they would look for answers. We've waited for weeks (sometimes months) and now no one wants to hear from us! How has my status changed other than I am now a bereaved parent?"* Where has courtesy, understanding and compassion gone?

It's well-known that doctors are busy and perhaps focused on the living, but why is it that bereaved parents sometimes cannot get timely feedback on autopsies, lab results from blood work/placental examination or other situations where the medical world explores why a baby(ies) died? Sure some tests take time, a lot of time in complicated situations, but the initiative to make a phone call to the parents at regular intervals until the answers come in would seem to be sensible, considerate, a recognition that not all pregnancies end in a healthy birth and an acknowledgement of the families' grief and pain. The added burden of initiating requests for feedback is very telling on a grieving family.

It's true some causes of death cannot be explained and parents may never learn why their baby(ies) died. If this is the case, then don't those parents still deserve to hear, "In spite of all the tests, we don't know why your baby died."? Surely parents have been through enough, and wouldn't it be ideal if doctors' offices could initiate feedback instead of parents regularly calling for progress reports or at a minimum the staff be properly trained in listening to the heartbreak and giving the parents a safe place to share what they are going through. As things currently stand, some parents report feeling side-lined, minimized or ignored and perceived as pushy and emotional.

All it would take is either a meeting or a personal phone call to set the matter straight: We found the reason your baby died or, the results are inconclusive and this is why. Even if certain tests, take months for results to come back, let the parents know! Such feedback offers closure, relieves the burden of guilt that Mom did something wrong, and reaffirms that the doctor and his staff care even when things don't work out. Otherwise parents fantasize about why their baby died, often blaming themselves, which can put an added strain on a marriage, as well as affect availability and parenting abilities of any other children.

We aren't talking rocket science here but compassion for each other under extenuating circumstances. One would think that being compassionate would be easy and I suppose most days it is, but when one is too busy (and I strongly suspect that is a big part of the problem for many doctors and nurses), then compassion can fall by the wayside and it is the most vulnerable who suffer as a result.

If you have any thoughts on this situation or have your own experience to tell, I'd love to hear from you. In fact, please feel free to write in about anything at all.

Thinking of you,

Lynda

The man who is swimming against the stream knows the strength of it.
Woodrow Wilson

On the Web.....

Memory Gifts, www.memorygiftsite.com
Creative memory gifts for every member of the family.

www.missfoundation.org
On line chatrooms for bereaved families and children. Lots of great information, including a Father's Page. Also a unique online store.

Alliance for Grandparents, A Support in Tragedy (AGAST), www.agast.org
Loss information for and about grandparents, includes discussion forums

"Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle."

Author unknown, from the internet

Correction to Forever Angels, Issue #07-06:

Sheila Catto was incorrectly described as the President of the Saskatoon Twin & Triplet Club. In actual fact Sheila is the MBC Club Representative and their former Newsletter Editor.

"Above all we must realize that each of us makes a difference with our life. Each of us impacts the world around us every single day. We have a choice to use the gift of our life to make the world a better place - or not to bother."

Jane Goodall

Questions, Questions.....

Trying Again After Loss:

Question: Hi there, I lost twins 13 weeks ago at 7 weeks. I have just found out that I'm pregnant again. I'm so worried. Help please!

Response:

Hello, I am so sorry to hear of your losses. No wonder you are scared. You've learned firsthand that the world can be an unsafe place and there is no preparation possible to shield us from the pain of losing our children. Please know that each pregnancy is different, even for the same woman. I am sure your doctor will now be following you very carefully, due to your history. This is good. You can also do a few things to stack the cards in your favour: eat healthily, don't smoke or be around secondhand smoke, keep regular doctor's visits, keep your stress levels as low as is possible. There is still no guarantee, but these steps are proactive and could make a difference. As you follow the timeline of your previous pregnancy, things will be worrisome and not everyone realizes how stressful memory lines of the previous pregnancy can be. If this happens to you, distract yourself with positive events: be with good friends, read a good book, visit a museum and the like. You may wish to journal your feelings. Many find writing cathartic. Also sharing with your partner your fears and letting him in on what you are feeling, could be helpful. Communication is never a bad thing. I wish you much happiness and hope you are soon holding your own precious baby.