Title:
Stories of Bereaved Parents: The Use of Religion/Spirituality to Cope With Their Infant's/Child's Death

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Session Title:
Coping Strategies for Infant Loss
Slot:
D 18: Sunday, 29 October 2017: 2:45 PM-4:00 PM
Scheduled Time:
3:25 PM

Keywords:
Bereaved parents, NICU/PICU death. and Spirituality

References:


Abstract Summary:
Death of an infant/child is a devastating experience for families. There is evidence that religious/spiritual practices may promote effective coping. Describing the stories of how bereaved parents used religious/spiritual practices to cope with their loss may be beneficial to healthcare professionals working with bereaved parents in the intensive care unit.

Learning Activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the use of religious/spiritual practices as a coping strategy for bereaved parents whose infants have died in the neonatal/pediatric intensive care unit.</td>
<td>A description will be given as to the types of religious/spiritual coping practices that was used by bereaved parents to cope with their loss.</td>
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<td>The learner will be able to identify, from the stories, of religious/spiritual coping practices used by bereaved parents to cope with their grief.</td>
<td>A description will be given as to the types of religious/spiritual coping practices that was used by bereaved parents to cope with their loss.</td>
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Abstract Text:

**Background/significance:** In the United States 51,000 infants and children under the age of 18 years die annually with 52% representing infant deaths. The loss of an infant/child is an event that severely taxes the parent's and family's ability to adjust to the death. Bereaved parents use a variety of resources to cope with grief and ontological questions that arise after death. Some parents identify a reliance on faith, believing in a higher power, while others find help in spiritual activities. Most parents describe telling the story about their deceased infant/child and creating meaning from the trauma as helpful. Very few studies capture stories from a diverse racial/ethnic population needed to create an understanding of how this population uses religion/spirituality activities to cope with an infant/child death.

**Purpose:** To explore how parents from a diverse racial/ethnic population use spirituality/religion activities following the death of their infant/child.

**Methods:** A qualitative approach was used to capture 63 parent (Black, White, Hispanic) stories. Following Florida International University, four hospitals and Florida Department of Health IRB approval, parents were recruited from neonatal and pediatric intensive care units 7 months following the death of their infant/child. Open-ended semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed. Deductive content analysis was used to explicate themes.

**Results:** Three major themes emerged: 1) creating meaning; 2) maintaining connection with their deceased infant/child and 3) moving forward with their lives that described how parents cope with the loss of the an infant/child.

**Discussion/Conclusion:** Bereaved parents’ stories demonstrated a strong link between the use of religion/spirituality activities and coping with the death of their infant/child. Religious/spiritual activities offer a meaningful way to address the ontological questions that arise after death.

**Clinical Relevance:** These findings are beneficial to healthcare professionals working with bereaved parents in the neonatal and pediatric intensive care unit and can be useful in providing support to bereaved parents of diverse racial/ethnic groups.