

practical issues and day-to-day managing were often deeply embedded in their experience of grief. Moving forward emotionally required both resolution of practicalities and dealing with the emotional impact of the effects. This may be important in thinking about and designing the kinds of services which are most helpful for bereaved people, and in training and equipping professionals and volunteers for working in such services. **BC**

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## W E B W A T C H

### Multiple birth loss

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Any pregnancy carries a certain amount of risk but for parents conceiving twins or higher multiples, the risks are even greater. Advances in fertility treatment have increased the number of multiple conceptions but with this often comes the reality of multiple losses.

Although there are several websites on multiple birth, coverage of bereavement issues is fairly brief. For anyone wanting to access the best information on multiple birth loss, the website of **The Centre for Loss in Multiple Birth (CLIMB)** at [www.climb-support.org](http://www.climb-support.org) provides all the information, links and articles worth viewing. Founded in 1987 by Jean Kollantai, a bereaved mother, this voluntary organisation offers support worldwide to anyone who has experienced the death of one or more of their twins or higher multiples at any time from conception to childhood. The support is provided by a quarterly, postal **newsletter**, a parent-to-parent **contact list** that enables members to contact each other by post, telephone or email, **gatherings** where possible and by several **contact registries**. CLIMB also seeks to inform the public, health care professionals and bereavement support groups by raising awareness of the many complex issues surrounding multiple birth loss.

The **FAQ section** provides several interesting articles, such as that by Deborah Davis exploring feelings of failure, guilt and anger. The need to access and understand the medical aspects of the loss, often so essential to the healing process, is also discussed here, with a link to an article by a doctor, Elizabeth Pector, 'The Search For Why'. Group organisers wishing to improve support for bereaved parents will find an excellent article under **Support groups/Counseling**.

The **Loss of Both or All** section lists specific internet resources (see Other Resources) including a link to **LAMBS**, a unique email support group for those who have experienced the loss of all babies in a multiple birth. Also included are two informative articles by Jean Kollantai, giving practical suggestions to help parents

immediately following their bereavement in hospital and during the days and months following the death (see 'The death of your twin or triplet babies' and 'If your loss has just occurred').

**Delayed grief** can be a factor in any bereavement but it can be even more common for parents experiencing a multiple birth as, quite often, they have to channel their energy into coping with surviving babies who may themselves be seriously ill. CLIMB member Brenda Noble has written an article, 'Dealing with delayed grief', offering helpful suggestions for coping (see the Loss of a Supertwin(s) section).

'How we deal with **labelling our surviving children**' explores how bereaved parents and society refer to survivors from a multiple birth. If only two triplets survive, for example, are parents comfortable with referring to them as twins? One member of CLIMB has carried out email interviews looking at parental attitudes, including whether there should be a universal term for bereaved parents, recognised by society, as are 'widow' and 'divorcée'. Examples of birth announcements submitted by parents are also included here. These can serve as an inspiration for any parent struggling with how to announce the birth of their child/children while wishing to acknowledge the death of a baby.

Because of the high number of babies conceived or because of congenital problems, parents are often asked to consider selective reduction through **Multifetal Pregnancy Reduction (MFPR)** and **selective termination**. CLIMB has started a contact registry for parents who have been involved in making these very difficult decisions. Internal links provide greater insight into the issues surrounding both procedures, together with some interesting articles including a questionnaire completed by CLIMB members and conducted by Deborah Davis, 'Emotional impacts of assisted reproductive technology' (see the section on Selective Reduction).

The Loss to **SIDS** section highlights the

need for more research into **sudden infant death syndrome** in relation to multiple birth survivors, and also includes external links for those who have experienced the unexplained death of an older child (**SUDC**). One of the articles here, 'SIDS in twins', incorporates some interesting statistical information.

Certain unique aspects of multiple pregnancies can make a **father's experiences** extremely complicated when bereavement occurs. In addition, denial, anger and feelings of failure to protect his partner and children can be magnified in the case of a complicated multiple birth. Lack of emotional support and the impact on relationships can also be major issues. These difficulties are explored in the **Dads** section, with many personal accounts submitted by fathers.

Sections of the site specifically for **grandparents, siblings, survivors, friends and multiples groups** are **still in progress** and, judging from the standard of the rest of the site, should provide some excellent material. The section for **professionals** is also being developed, although there is already an excellent four-page document giving detailed suggestions for best practice for hospital caregivers. The latest addition to this rapidly evolving site is the translation of some articles into **French** and **Spanish**.

An extensive **bibliography** gives brief descriptions of relevant books and links to **external articles, websites and email support groups** dealing with multiple birth loss in general (click on About CLIMB on the main menu). Of particular note here are links to articles on 'The death of twin babies: some comments for grief counselors' and 'Bereavement in multiple birth', written by two doctors and aimed at caregivers. The links to sites in Other Resources include the UK peer support group organisation for bereaved parents affiliated to **TAMBA (Twins and Multiple Birth Association)**.

Together with the large number of personal experiences submitted by CLIMB members throughout, this is an extensive and extremely informative site. **BC**