



An evaluative survey to assess the effectiveness of using an interactive workbook to deliver bereavement education to undergraduate student midwives



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ABSTRACT

Background: the NMSF (2009) reported that 74 Trusts (40%) in the UK lack expertise in delivering maternity based bereavement care. In response, three midwifery lecturers were issued with a small grant from NHS Scotland to devise and evaluate an interactive workbook intended to develop student midwives understanding of how to deliver high quality bereavement care.

Aim: to develop a workbook called – *an interactive workbook to shape bereavement care for midwives in clinical practice* – and evaluate it for effectiveness at delivering learning objectives developed from the literature and from prior written lesson plans.

Method: an evaluative audit was carried out using a scored questionnaire – Understanding Bereavement Evaluation Tool (UBET) – to gather data before and post-workbook completion. The UBET was purposely designed to gather data about participants' perceived level of learning before and post-workbook completion. Participants were student midwives ($n=179$) in their second/third year of study on a three year midwifery degree programme at one of three universities.

Findings: the mean pre-workbook UBET score equalled 16.04 ($SD=3.81$) and post-intervention 26.45 ($SD=2.16$). A significant main effect of observation point was observed ($p<0.001$), with post-intervention scores considerably higher than pre-intervention.

Discussion: findings demonstrate that the workbook is an effective method for teaching bereavement care to student midwives (it is available from the first author).

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Introduction

The Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS) advocate that health-care professionals who work with grieving couples require specialist tuition to prepare them to provide appropriate care (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS), 2009). For the majority of childbearing women who have experienced loss, the quality of midwifery care will have considerable affect upon their reactions and grief process (Engler and Lasker, 2000; Rowa-Dewar, 2002). For maternity care staff, providing bereavement care can be challenging, complex and exacting (Gensch and Midland, 2000; Säflund et al.,

2004), with some finding it difficult to provide appropriate care (Robinson et al., 1999). The National Maternity Support Foundation (NMSF) (2009) survey testimonies that the quality of bereavement care issued in some maternity units in the UK is inconsistent. Based upon an 82% response rate from NHS Trusts in the UK the NMSF report (2009) states:

It is clear that there is a somewhat 'patchy' approach to bereavement midwife care with an apparent lack of national strategy and clear up-to-date guidelines (NMSF, 2009, p. 12).

The NMSF (2009) reported that 74 Trusts (40%) lacked expertise, with urgent re-evaluation required to decide how bereavement care should be directed at a national level. Three midwifery lecturers from three UK universities were issued with a small grant from NHS Scotland *Shaping Bereavement Care* project to devise, utilise and evaluate an interactive workbook designed to equip

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student midwives with essential theory to underpin effective delivery of bereavement care to childbearing women.

For the midwifery lecturer, teaching large classes of student midwives emotionally evocative topics can be challenging, with a workbook just one method of delivering the learning objectives. The majority of lecturers who have delivered bereavement education in a classroom will have experienced the emotional effects for some students with unresolved bereavement histories. A bespoke workbook tailored specifically to deliver concise information can replace the need for textbooks that contain patchy non-applied information. It may also be practical when the library is ill equipped to resource the entire student population. During workbook devise, content may be tailored to deliver defined learning objectives through a versatile balance of reading, visual aids and multipurpose activities. The major challenge is to summarise information in a format that may be easily interpreted by the student? The information can be designed to reflect carefully synthesised evidence-based information from many disciplines and complement the other educational materials available (e.g., Mander, 2006; Kelly, 2007; SANDS, 2009). To date no author has published an applied interactive workbook with interleaved activities for the specific purpose of equipping student midwives with knowledge to shape delivery of effective bereavement care to childbearing women experiencing perinatal loss. Consequently, the aim was to develop a workbook called – *an interactive workbook to shape bereavement care for midwives in clinical practice* – and evaluate it for effectiveness at delivering the prescribed learning objectives.

Method

An evaluative audit of effectiveness of the workbook was conducted between the 1 March 2011 and the 31 May 2012. Processes explored the workbook experience from the perspective of student midwives enrolled on a three year midwifery degree programme at one of three universities in the UK. An evaluative audit was selected because it is an effective method by which to engage a sizable population. Rather than relying on subjective feelings, a survey can gather objective information from which the researcher can make sound data-driven decisions. Surveying provides a snapshot of the target population to establish a baseline from which the researcher can compare perceived knowledge before and after an intervention (Beimer and Lyberg, 2003).

The workbook

The initial goal was to develop the learning objectives and decide upon relevant content. The philosophical approach was holistic, with emphasis placed upon the physical, psychological and social components of perinatal bereavement care. Content was purposely designed to equip student midwives with essential applied knowledge to manage childbearing women, partners and families who are experiencing perinatal loss. From the authors' clinical experience, a review of relevant literature and viewing examples of prior written lesson plans, the following learning objectives were determined (see Table 1).

To view the workbook content see Table 2.

Table 1

Learning objectives of the workbook titled 'An interactive workbook to shape bereavement care for midwives in clinical practice'.

(L01)	Classify areas of midwifery practice that incur bereavement.
(L02)	Critically appraise the procedures categorised on a bereavement protocol.
(L03)	Critically appraise the models of grieving.
(L04)	Recognise instances where a childbearing woman's grief process has become dysfunctional and help is required from mental health experts.
(L05)	Outline processes involved in caring for and advising a bereaved woman/partner/family about how to access ongoing support on discharge from midwifery care.
(L06)	Recognise where a bereavement incident may affect a member of staff adversely.
(L07)	Assess individual women/partner/family's spiritual/religious beliefs and adapt bereavement care to accommodate.

Twenty-nine activities were interleaved throughout the workbook. To view an example see Table 3.

Pilot study

Four credible individuals in terms of knowledge and experience of perinatal bereavement commented on draft one of the workbook (one midwife counsellor, two midwifery lecturers and one senior lecturer in pastoral theology). Their guidance helped shape the content to reflect an accurate and meaningful account of how perinatal bereavement care should be organised within the maternity unit. Three third year student midwives completed the amended draft, with alterations and additions made in accordance with feedback offered.

Data collection instrument

A scored survey instrument – the Understanding Bereavement Evaluation Tool (UBET) – was purposely designed to gather data about participants' perceived level of learning before and post-workbook completion. Subsequent validity tests have measured and demonstrated robustness of the UBET at assessing students' knowledge gain. PCA identified that the UBET is comprised of two sub-scales (*theoretical knowledge base—Q1, 2 & 3*) and (*psychosocial elements of care delivery—Q 4, 5 & 6*) (Hollins Martin et al., 2013). The UBET measured student perceptions of learning in both quantitative and qualitative form about a range of factors associated with the workbook experience. The UBET utilises a Likert scale which measures perceived levels of knowledge in relation to

Table 2

Content of the workbook titled 'An interactive workbook to shape bereavement care for midwives in clinical practice'.

1.1.	Areas of midwifery practice that incur bereavement
1.2.	Defining the terms loss, grief and bereavement
Chapter Two: Procedures categorised on a bereavement protocol	
2.1.	Protocols for caring for women who have experienced late fetal loss or stillbirth
2.2.	Protocol discussion
Chapter Three: Models of grieving	
Chapter Four: Difficulties with adjusting to the loss	
4.1.	Bereavement and maternal mental health
4.2.	Signs and symptoms of difficulties adjusting to the loss
4.3.	Role of the midwife in risk assessment
4.4.	Subsequent care
4.5.	The multidisciplinary team
4.6.	When grief becomes problematic
Chapter Five: Ongoing support	
5.1.	Role of the midwife in bereavement care
5.2.	Support services
Chapter Six: Staff Support	
6.1.	Recognising stress
Chapter Seven: Assessment and care of a bereaved woman and the family's spiritual and religious needs	
7.1.	Effects of family bereavement on children
7.2.	Religious and cultural beliefs
7.3.	The role of rituals
7.4.	Encouraging memories
Workbook conclusion	
References	

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