

Background

Losing a baby in pregnancy through miscarriage or stillbirth is a profound loss. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge patients' and families' need to grieve. Perinatal losses are especially difficult because parents envision an entire lifetime for their baby from the moment of the confirmation of the pregnancy. Regardless of gestational age, parents experience a loss of their hopes, dreams, and expectations for the child. Perinatal death represents multiple losses to parents and a multitude of emotions (Berry et al., 2021). There is no systematic progression or pattern for how individuals respond to a pregnancy loss because grief is intrinsically unique. Perinatal loss also affects care providers. Thus, it is essential to provide support to the healthcare professionals that are caring for the patient and families since their care plays an essential role in supporting the patient's grieving process (Berry et al., 2021). Guiding parents through a perinatal loss is an essential part of caring, and the caregiver role extends beyond covering the patient's physiological needs. Beginning during the first contact, creating an atmosphere of trust between parents and caregivers and a sense of attachment and bonding with the baby ensures that parents and caregivers will form a partnership guided by the most appropriate recommendations and decisions for that particular family (Roberts et al., 2024). At Salinas Valley Health Medical Center, perinatal nurses verbalized that they lacked the knowledge and skill needed to provide this type of care to patients, and they would benefit from formal training. The purpose of this education initiative was to improve nurses' knowledge and confidence about perinatal loss through a structured training.



Methods

The Perinatal Loss Committee members discussed strategies to improve the care for patients and support nurses' educational needs. Committee members collaborated with the Salinas Valley Health Foundation and applied for a grant through the Hospice Giving Foundation. The Perinatal Loss Committee Chair Norma Coyazo, MSN, RNC-OB, C-EFM, and Labor & Delivery Manager Daniela Jago, MSN, RNC-OB, presented to the Hospice Giving Foundation members on the perinatal loss experience. The committee received a generous grant of \$105,000 to train social workers and nurses from the Mother/Baby, Labor & Delivery, and Neonatal Intensive Care Units. The Perinatal Loss Committee explored training options and selected a module offered through Resolve Through Sharing® (2024) bereavement education. More than 60,000 nurses, chaplains, physicians, social workers, and caregivers have benefitted from the bereavement education program since 1981. The 2-day course focuses on caring for families experiencing perinatal loss, acquiring the skills needed to provide evidence-based, gold-standard bereavement care. Gold-standard bereavement care enhances knowledge, skills, and comfort levels when caring for grieving patients and families across the lifespan and involves compassionate care that prioritizes the emotional and psychological needs of bereaved patients and families (Resolve Through Sharing, 2024). The course also addressed how to reduce healthcare disparities, support diverse grieving populations, and strategies for clinician self-care and to support colleagues.

In addition to the training, the committee implemented additional strategies to enhance the Perinatal Loss Program which included:

- Expanded Cremation Fund to include access to additional funeral homes in Monterey County
- Purchased a second cooling CuddleCot™ (a portable cooling unit that allows families to spend more time with their baby after a loss)
- Purchased a new digital camera
- Purchased a new printer
- Purchased a candle and candle stand
- Revised memory boxes (includes one size poncho and knit cap, resealable baggie for a wisp of baby's hair, heart pillow, blank card for baby's prints and baby's birth information card, footprint kit, basic condolence card, and a mother's journal)
- Owen's Honor Keepsake Box: Owen's Honor is a non-profit organization that provides comfort packages for parents experiencing loss. The care package includes: supportive book, engraved forget-me-not necklace, memorial candle, memorial ornament, grief journal, photo frame for ultrasound image, canvas for footprints, list of resources and local and virtual support groups, and handwritten sympathy card (see Figure 1).
- Offered water/immersion photograph

Results

Eight sessions of the Resolve Through Sharing bereavement training were offered via Webex from February to December 2022. Each training session was 16 hours over two days. More than 80% of our clinical nurses attended.

Nurses who completed the training anecdotally reported feeling more comfortable caring for patients and their families. The quote on the right is from a Labor & Delivery nurse.



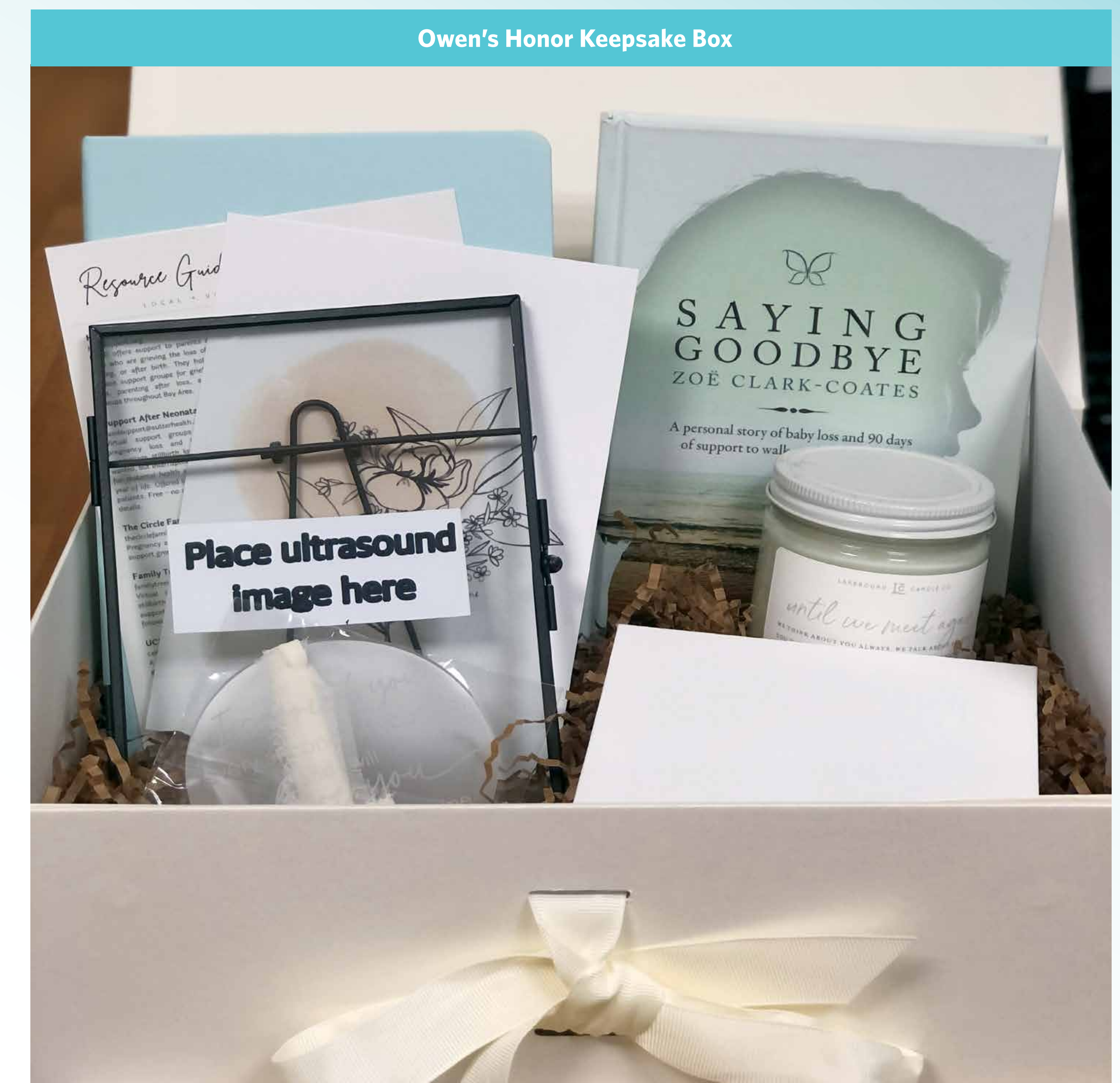
After taking the Resolve Through Sharing bereavement training, I learned to communicate better with perinatal loss patients and families. In addition, I feel more comfortable taking care of perinatal loss patients after taking the training.

AMELIA AROMIN, RN

Conclusions

Nurses reported that their knowledge and confidence in caring for perinatal loss patients increased after completion of the Resolve Through Sharing bereavement training. The Perinatal Loss Committee will provide ongoing bereavement education to continually improve nurses' confidence caring for patients and their families experiencing perinatal loss.

Figure 1



References

- Berry, S. N., Marko, T., & Oneal, G. (2021). Qualitative interpretive metasynthesis of parents' experiences of perinatal loss. *Journal of Obstetric, Gynecologic, and Neonatal Nursing: JOGNN*, 50(1), 20-29.
- Resolve Through Sharing. (2024). *Resolve through sharing bereavement training*. <https://www.resolvethroughsharing.org/bereavement-training>
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