Stillbirth Research and Education Submission 1

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Hello my name is Jennie Klohs and I am a mother of a beautiful baby girl who was stillborn. Through my experience I have come to realise that there is lack of research, communication, experience, support and most importantly empathy when it comes to stillbirths. Everything throughout my pregnancy was normal no major issues, that was until my 20 week ultrasound. I had the ultrasound on the 18th of January and we left thinking everything was fine. I picked up the ultrasound on the 23rd of January and read the results. We found out that there were some concerns with the ultrasound. I contacted the hospital and was asked to go in the next day. This is when we found out that Maddison didn't form her cerebellum and her heart had stopped beating. There was lack of communication between the ultrasound clinic and the hospital that left us with not knowing that anything was wrong for 5 days. Now in my case it would not have made a difference however the 5 days could have been the difference between life and death in other cases. Everything after this day was very clinical and what I felt to be soulless and heartless. I was admitted to hospital on the 25th of January to be induced. I was put in the birthing unit, I was able to hear the cries of newborn babies knowing that my daughter would not cry. I could hear the heartbeat monitors on the expectant mothers. It was devastating and made this hard situation harder. I was treated like every other mother about to give birth but there was a major difference, my baby wasn't alive. I feel there were no allowances for this. Once I had given birth I fell asleep with Maddison on my chest, only to be woken up by the sounds of a baby crying. For a split second I thought it was my baby girl only for reality to kick back in like a slap to the face. It is something that I hope no other mother will have to experience. I heard sentences like "you had a straight forward birth" and "what was wrong with your foetus". There is a lack experience, knowledge and training when dealing with parents who are suffering a great loss. The doctors did everything by the book and was very clinical but was lacking empathy and feeling. I believe that there needs to be an overhaul on the policies and procedures in regards to stillbirths, as well as updating facilities. I believe more research could help to reduce the stillbirth rate which I for one was shocked to find out how high it was. There needs to be bereavement suites in all major hospitals in Australia to help give a little comfort and privacy in such a horrible time. Where they are not put in amongst all the other expectant mothers and won't hear the newborn babies' cries. In the suites need to be resources and information on services that is available to parents such as photography, hand and footprint inking and Angel gowns. Most of which I found out about when it was too late. There needs to be more in-depth information on the benefits of having an autopsy done because I found the doctors just didn't have enough training in this particular situation. I think that not only is more research needed to help reduce the stillbirth rate but also help get the much needed answers that some families never receive. I have been talking with my local hospital about improvements that I believe need to be done and will be contacted to help with planning. But I do not want to stop there I would like us to come together as a nation to make changes Australia wide. I believe I need to do whatever I can do and I owe it to the next mother who will unfortunately become a mother of an angel.