

National  
Organization of  
Mothers  
Of  
Twins  
Clubs, Inc.

SUBJECT:

**PARTIAL PERINATAL LOSS IN  
MULTIPLE BIRTHS: A PARENTAL SURVEY**

RESEARCHER:

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DATE:

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**PURPOSE:** Steven and Mary Sainsbury are the parents of quadruplets who researched this subject.

**DEFINITION:** Partial Perinatal Loss (PPL)--perinatal death occurring simultaneously with perinatal survival in a multiple gestation birth. (Example: quadruplet birth in which one child dies and three survive).

**METHOD:** This survey was completed by parents who had experienced PPL. The sample consisted of 61 sets of parents--43 twin, 12 triplet, 4 quadruplet, and 2 quintuplet pregnancies. Respondents were obtained through OUR NEWSLETTER (a support network for multiple birth parents who suffer fetal or neonatal loss), Triplet Connection and NOMOTC.

GESTATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS:

1. A. 33% were less than 31 weeks gestation at delivery  
B. 43% were 32-37 weeks  
C. 23% were over 37 weeks
2. Causes of death...  
A. 31% - stillborn  
B. 26% - complication of respiratory distress syndrome  
C. 13% - heart defects  
D. 30% - misc. causes

PARENTAL DEMOGRAPHICS:

3. Most were still married (one was single and one was divorced)
4. 31% had combined income of less than \$30,000
5. 15% of the parents only had high school education

PARENTAL REACTIONS TO DEATH:

6. A. 51% expected the fetal or neonatal death  
B. 44% had unexpected death
7. Parent's main feelings were depression, confusion and guilt

- 8. Lost sibling(s) mentions in family conversation...
  - A. 39% - daily    B. 18% - weekly    C. 25% - monthly    D. 14% - rarely
- 9. Labeling of surviving multiples...
  - A. 34% labeled according to the number of survivors (surviving triplets became known as twins)
  - B. 41% labeled according to the original number of infants
  - C. 24% stated that both designations were used

10. 38% of parents sought professional assistance for themselves in dealing with the death within the family

11. 47% thought there wasn't adequate support available for the family's needs

SIBLING REACTIONS TO DEATH:

- 12. 7% of parents sought outside help for the surviving child(ren)
- 13. Most parents did not complete the questions about surviving siblings' emotional reactions due to youth of the survivors
- 14. Parents seemed to have more trouble at birthdays with memories of the deceased.

15. Is surviving child comfortable with loss of sibling?
 

- A. 14 of 24 said yes                      B. 10 out of 24 said no

16. Did surviving multiple appropriately handle the death of sibling?
 

- A. 1 out of 21 said no                      B. 18 out of 21 said yes

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**CONCLUSION:**

PPL is an intensely stressful and emotionally difficult experience. Parents must care for multiple newborn infants while also experiencing the death of additional children. There is a lack of family support services. Surviving children have more benign reactions. Support should be encouraged through these sources: family members, physicians and nursing personnel, mental health professionals, clergy, support groups, and support literature.

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PARENTAL REACTIONS TO DEATH:

- 6. A. 21% expected the fetal or neonatal death
- B. 44% had unexpected death
- 7. Parent's main feelings were depression, confusion and guilt