

Study seeks parents of stillborn children

Parents of stillborn children and supporting health workers are being sought to take part in a James Cook University study exploring how writing about personal experience may influence the grief healing process.

Teacher and researcher Sandra Bulger plans to facilitate writing workshops in Cairns and Townsville to support participants writing their own stories. The PhD student understands this sensitive topic due to her own experience of stillbirth and late miscarriage loss.

“Your stories and your journeys are very important,” Ms Bulger said. “This research can give insight into what stillbirth loss means for those most deeply affected by it, which will promote greater understanding and public awareness. Recommendations can be made that could beneficially influence the care and management of stillbirth and assist other parents who may suffer this loss in the future.

“A further aim of the research is to broaden our current understandings about stillbirth and the therapeutic qualities of personal writing about loss from stillbirth. I am very interested to explore the creative, spiritual and transformative qualities noticed by people when they express their grief or experiences through narrative.

“When I faced the heartbreak of my own baby’s stillbirth, writing provided me with a safe haven where I could get in touch with my thoughts and feelings. It was through the gentle nurturing of this creative spark that I began to heal.”

Ms Bulger, who holds a Master of Arts in Writing, said the workshops would be held over several weekends. Participants would then be asked to take part in a confidential interview about their experiences of stillbirth and the writing workshop involvement.

Any parent who had experienced stillbirth – the loss of a baby after 20 weeks gestation who was not born live – is invited to take part in the project. Health professionals such as doctors, nurses, midwives and social workers who may like to write about their experiences of supporting parents through stillbirth also are urged to participate.

“For this extremely sensitive area of research I can bring a compassionate and empathetic understanding to the silent and often hidden grief parents suffer from their own stillbirth sorrow,” Ms Bulger said. “It’s personal. I am motivated to do what I can to ease the suffering of others.”

For more information, or to register for the study, please contact Ms Bulger on 0447 031 090 or email sandra.bulger@my.jcu.edu.au