

NEWSRELEASE

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For Immediate Release
July 19, 2002

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KUBLER-ROSS RESPONDS TO UK STUDY ON STILLBIRTH

Phoenix, Ariz. --- In a rare media response, world-renowned thanatologist and the first researcher to identify the stages of grief in her pivotal book *On Death and Dying*, Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, disputes recent media coverage of research from the UK that suggests that mothers may not benefit from holding their deceased (stillborn) children. Kubler-Ross, also an Advisory Member to the MISS Foundation, a support group for grieving parents, said, "When are people going to realize that the only way we'd expect a loving mother to feel who has lost her child to death is overwhelmingly sad and experiencing grief? Can we really put a one year, two year, or five year time limit on emotions of this type?"

Hundreds of mothers have contacted the M.I.S.S. Foundation expressing anger and disappointment over the research published by *The Lancet* and picked up by a number of major newspapers across the US. The study, which only included 65 women and which the authors admit was inadequately controlled, included a recommendation that mothers of stillborn children should not be encouraged to see and hold their children. The mothers, who have inundated the M.I.S.S. Foundation and the authors of the article expressing their outrage, indicate that recommending a change of protocol based on a single study is irresponsible.

"People must remember the golden rule of research and epidemiology: Replication must be done in order to prove validity. I would strongly caution health care providers and facilities not to advocate a change in their postmortem protocol based on this isolated study. The author quotes several other studies that contradict this one. Given the diminutive sample population involved, one should be skeptical when reviewing this research," said Joanne Cacciatore-Garard, founder of the MISS Foundation. "Justifiably, our concern is that healthcare providers will overreact and change programs that encourage parents to see and hold their children

before all the necessary scientific studies have been completed to justify such a change." Examples of chaplains recommending protocol changes based on a newspaper article regarding this study have already been reported.

Dr. Michael R. Berman, author and Clinical Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Yale University Medical School states, " I advocate and encourage my patients to see, hold, bond with and caress their newly born children-for as long as they need- who are not born alive. In over 30 years of personal experience with this approach, I have never been sorry and have only received positive responses from my patients...I have also spoken with and cared for patients who have experienced these losses and were not offered the opportunity to see or hold their children and they regrettably wished they had..."

The MISS Foundation believes that parents should be in an environment that *encourages* them to see and hold their children. "The environment should not be coercive and should not mandate that all people must hold their children, but rather, should be supportive and sensitive to the families' needs, including the mother, father, surviving siblings, and grandparents," said Cacciatore-Garard. "In addition," she says, "we need to realize that normal grief responses can and do last well past one year particularly in parental grief. As a society, we must stop pathologizing normal responses to death."

Kubler-Ross and Cacciatore-Garard note that the MISS Foundation doesn't believe that incomplete scientific studies should replace the wisdom of thousands of people who have lived through the experience and report antipodal findings.

MISS is a nonprofit, volunteer based organization committed to providing emergency support to families in crisis after the death of their infant or young child from any cause. We are here to help families cope with the resultant feelings of overwhelming grief and loss. For more information contact

www.missfoundation.org and www.elisabethkublerross.com.