



## Research Article

# Advancing care and support for women and families after stillbirth or neonatal death in Kenya and Uganda: a feasibility study

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## Plain language summary

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Around the world, a baby dies before, during or soon after birth every 16 seconds. The overwhelming majority of deaths happen in low-resource countries, three-quarters in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Baby death is among the most traumatic life experiences for parents and has many detrimental effects for families and society. In the days and weeks afterwards, compassionate care and emotional support help parents cope and prevent serious health and social problems. However, our research in Kenya and Uganda showed that support after baby death was very limited both in hospitals and after discharge. This study, involving 107 women, assessed whether it would be possible to conduct a large trial, to test a new package of care. The package, designed with local parents and health workers, included creating a group of specially trained health worker 'bereavement champions' in two hospitals in Kenya and Uganda and offering bereaved mothers telephone support from a trained peer, a mother who had previous experience of baby death, post discharge. Fifty-one women were recruited after introduction of the new package of care and their care and experiences were compared with 56 women having 'usual' care in the hospitals, before the new package was introduced. Despite COVID-19, we recruited 89% of planned number of women, and 85% of participants completed the study. The new package of care was introduced, mostly as planned and women, families and health workers generally welcomed them and wanted to be involved in research to improve care. This suggests that a larger research trial is feasible. This trial would test whether similar changes can reduce abnormally strong grief for bereaved mothers, which puts them at risk of mental health problems. We will also assess the costs of making changes and gain understanding of the conditions necessary to successfully roll out the changes more widely in similar places.