

Men and Recurrent Miscarriage: Urgent inclusion needed



Policy Brief 6, September 2022

A qualitative analysis of the experiences of **men** following recurrent **miscarriage** in Ireland

Key issues

Miscarriage is one of the most common complications of pregnancy. Recurrent miscarriage (RM) affects 1%-3% of the reproductive age population^{1,2}

The psychological burden and impact of RM on men remains largely unexplored

As an often 'silent issue' for men, RM is a deeply emotional experience and requires similar supports that are provided for women

This includes inclusion in care and greater access to information and supportive services during and after the miscarriage



Aim

This qualitative study explored the experiences and impact of RM on men whose partners had two or more first-trimester miscarriages

Participants

This qualitative study explored in an in-depth way the lived experiences of 5 men following RM; 3 men had experienced **3 consecutive miscarriages** and 2 had experienced **4 consecutive miscarriages**, 3 participants had no living children from their current relationships

The small number of men who were recruited into the study is indicative of the **silent** nature of RM for men

What we did

A **qualitative interview** methodology and phenomenological analysis was used to examine the experiences of men whose partners had experienced two or more consecutive first trimester miscarriages

All participants had received RM care in a tertiary maternity hospital in the Republic of Ireland

A purposefully designed semi-structured interview guide was used to elicit the experiences of men through each **stage of the RM care pathway**. The mean interview time was 65 mins and all interviews were conducted face-to-face. The semi-structured nature of the interviews provided uniformity in the data collection while also allowing the individual lived experiences of men to be captured

The analysis provided **detailed understanding** of the depth of experiences for men following RM

**Read the full
paper here**



What did we find?

THEME 1 | The deeply emotional experiences of men following RM

- Projection of joy and excitement for the future associated with the news of first pregnancy
- Deep connection and protective response evoked after visualisation of ultrasound imaging
- Perceived role as protector for their partner(s) following miscarriage(s)

THEME 2 | Frustrations experienced during the provision of support following RM

- Lack of information about the miscarriage and subsequent procedures
- Practical and logistical aspects of the service evoked frustration and anger

THEME 3 | A sense of feeling unimportant

- Feeling unimportant as a man
- Lack of acknowledgement for grief of RM *"it is my loss as well"*
- Lack of engagement with the male partners coupled with a sense of feeling unimportant was a consistent experience

“ The second time was worse because we had this little picture, a heart was beating...

I was focussed on making sure she was ok, ... I just felt like I had to step up more.

Staying positive was harder each time. ”

“ That tiny bit of advice would have made the world of difference ... I got a bit angry after that. I didn't know it was such a high percentage.

I rang the number for the hospital, no answer, rang the emergency room, no answer. We were just waiting, she was constantly bleeding ... her pants at this stage were ruined and by the time we got into the doctor, it was 11.30 or 12 that night... ”

How could RM support for men be improved in Ireland?

- The impact of RM on men should be acknowledged in the provision of RM care
- Men require support, information and practical advice about RM and RM care pathways for their partner so that they can be an active support
- Men should be acknowledged and included in the provision of RM care alongside their partner
- A dedicated support clinic/service should be provided for men to address their psychological/support needs
- Need for greater public awareness about miscarriage and its prevalence to reduce public 'silence'
- Increase opportunities for men to engage in research about RM

Further information

Harty T, Trench M, Keegan O, O'Donoghue K, Nuzum D. The experiences of men following recurrent miscarriage in an Irish tertiary hospital: A qualitative analysis. *Health Expectations*. 2022;25(3):1048-1057. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.13452>

References

¹Quenby S, Gallos ID, Dhillon-Smith RK, et al. Miscarriage matters: the epidemiological, physical, psychological, and economic costs of early pregnancy loss. *Lancet*. 2021;397(10285):1658-1667. ²ESHRE. Guideline on the Management of Recurrent Pregnancy Loss. Version 2. Grimbergen, Belgium: ESHRE; 2017