

Abstract for Sands National Conference 2019, Christchurch

Vicki Culling & Suzanne Edwards

Concurrent Session

Title: When Mother and Baby Die: A Family's Story

Abstract:

The death of a baby at any gestation or age is tragic for all families; and when the mother dies as well, it is also devastating. The aftermath of maternal mortality is a topic that many know little about, and with no specific groups to turn to for information and support, families often feel adrift in a haze of trauma and grief.

In this presentation, we will discuss maternal and perinatal mortality in Aotearoa New Zealand before telling one Pākehā family's story. Nic was a healthy young woman looking forward to the birth of her first baby and all that motherhood involves. Tragically, Nic died on her due date, as did her precious baby, Tristan. In this presentation, Suzanne, Nic's mother and Tristan's grandmother, will tell her story of navigating a completely unexpected journey of loss and grief, and make recommendations for supporting families who also find themselves on this unknown path.

We conclude the presentation with a brief discussion on documentation and support.

Bios:

Vicki Culling PhD is an educator in the area of perinatal and infant loss in Aotearoa NZ, providing training for professionals and volunteers who work with bereaved parents, families and whānau. Vicki is a bereaved parent and lives in Wellington.

Suzanne Edwards lives in Christchurch and has worked in administration and managerial roles over the past 15 years. She is the mother to three grown children, Matthew, Tim and Nic, and grandmother to Tristan. Suzanne is interested in developing some kind of support in New Zealand for families who experience the loss of a mother during birth.