



The use of cold cots following perinatal death [RSS](#) [Download PDF](#)

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Recently it was reported that a couple had used a cooling cot to care for their dead baby girl for 16 days (12 in a hospice and 4 days at home) prior to her funeral . The family felt this prolonged the amount of time they could spend with their baby which helped their grieving process.

We recently evaluated parents' experience of bereavement care after perinatal death in a single tertiary centre (see [Table 1](#)). This survey included questions regarding the use of cooling mattresses and whether parents had taken their babies' bodies home; 70% of respondents (N = 58) remembered using the cooling cot in hospital. Of the 22 respondents who answered the question about taking their babies bodies home from hospital, 9% had taken their babies' bodies home from hospital. Only 5% of those who did not take their babies bodies home were unaware that they could. When asked to reflect on their experience, 14% of respondents were unsure as to whether they would have wanted to take their babies' bodies home. It is possible that such parents might be more likely to take their baby's body home from hospital if this option were more widely publicised and more socially acceptable.

Table 1

Data regarding the frequency of use of cooling cot and whether parents took their baby's body home after a perinatal death.

Question	Response		
	Yes	No	Cannot remember
Were you given the option of using the cooling mattress?	32 (69.6%)	5 (10.9%)	9 (19.6%)
Did you take your baby's body home from hospital?	Yes	No	Not aware that

Question	Response		
			could
	2 (9.1%)	19 (86.4%)	1 (4.6%)
	Yes	No	Unsure
Would you have wanted to take your baby's body home from hospital?	1 (4.8%)	17 (81.0%)	3 (14.3%)

Our results are similar to a Swedish study which found that only 4% of mothers surveyed took her baby's body home. This reflects a significant change in culture over the last century as prior to the hospitalisation of maternity care, babies would be born at home, and in the event of a death, would often remain at home until a funeral.

Data on the effect of holding and spending time with babies after perinatal death largely identifies positive psychological outcomes for the parents. In contrast, bereaved parents report that it felt unnatural to leave their baby and of difficulty in going home empty-handed. Leaving the baby behind in hospital can contradict the parental biological instinct to care for and protect the offspring. Although the majority of parents currently do not wish to take their babies bodies home from hospital, for those that do it can be possible to create memories, to feel like they have cared for their baby and to say a personal farewell to the baby in their own environment. It can also allow friends and family to meet the baby, which may help the grieving process and reduce the social isolation bereaved parents report.

In the UK 91% of Health Trusts/Boards report that they have access to a Cold Cot and 93% reported that there were provisions in place for bereaved parents to take their baby out of the hospital if they wished to. Whilst these figures, showing that they are available in the majority of Trusts are positive, they are frequently provided by charitable donations, and coverage is not available to all parents. It is important that these options are available to all bereaved parents, including awareness that taking their baby away from hospital is possible, so that parents' time with their baby is maximised.

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