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### **Religious Beliefs and Practices Have a Role in Grieving after Perinatal Loss**

Religious practices and beliefs may aid in coping with bereavement and grief. Data from 110 women enrolled in the original Lehigh Perinatal Loss study (Toedter et al., 1988), and who were followed-up for at least a year, were re-evaluated with respect to unpublished results from an initial survey of religious beliefs and practices. Data were collected at 4-6 weeks, 1 year and 2 years after pregnancy loss. Scores were calculated for groups of questions dealing with forms of religious coping and religiosity. Specific beliefs - in God, in an afterlife, or that the loss was the will of God, were scored separately. These data on religious beliefs were evaluated for correlations with scores for the total 33-item PGS and its three subscales (Active Grief, Difficulty Coping, Despair) at each time period. Being religious, a church member, agreement with statements of extrinsic or intrinsic religiosity or belief that the loss was the will of God did not correlate with grief at most time periods. Uncertainty about belief in God, belief in an afterlife (even when corrected for gestational age at time of loss), and agreement with statements classified as negative religious coping all were strongly correlated with higher grief scores, reflected in total and some subscale PGS scores (Pearson's  $r$  +/- 0.203 to 0.538;  $p$  = .04 to <.001) at most time periods.

Physicians caring for women after pregnancy loss could better predict patients' risk for prolonged or complicated grief, by inquiring about these specific religious beliefs/practices.