RESUMO - COMPROMISSO SOCIAL DO MÉDICO CATÓLICO

# BETWEEN THE BEGINNING AND THE END: WHEN CARE MEANS RECOGNIZING THE DIGNITY OF LIFE

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Perinatal loss is a profoundly impactful event, often accompanied by intense emotional and existential suffering, requiring a comprehensive and compassionate approach from healthcare professionals. A primigravida patient at 20 weeks of gestation, with a twin pregnancy, was admitted with spontaneous abortion and progressed to labor without maternal complications. The fetuses weighed 475 g and 450 g. During labor, in the midst of an imminent loss, the parents made a simple yet deeply meaningful request: they wished for their children to be baptized. In that moment, clinical data became secondary to the emotional and spiritual needs of the family. The request was not merely for a religious act, but for recognition — an affirmation that those lives existed, were loved, and possessed dignity. Respecting the family's beliefs, the attending physician performed the baptism during labor in a simple and dignified manner. This act represented a shift from purely technical care to a more comprehensive approach, integrating emotional and spiritual dimensions. Perinatal grief is frequently underestimated despite its long-term psychological impact. Recognizing the existence of the newborn and validating the loss are essential

elements in supporting the grieving process. In this context, spirituality can play a central role in providing meaning and comfort. This experience highlights that, even when cure is no longer possible, care remains essential. The physician’s role extends beyond clinical intervention to include presence, empathy, and the ability to acknowledge the human experience in its most vulnerable moments. Recognizing the dignity of a life, no matter how brief, does not change the outcome, but it profoundly transforms the meaning of that encounter. There is a moment when medicine can no longer save, but it is precisely then that it can truly care.

Palavras-chave: perinatal loss; spiritual care; grief; medical ethics.