

# ANA MARTÍN ANCEL

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## Le cure palliative perinatali come amore alla vita

Perinatal Palliative Care is specialized medical care for the fetuses and families that receive the diagnosis of life-limiting illnesses during pregnancy. It is also offered to newborn infants delivered before the limit of viability (around 23 weeks of gestation), who have no chance of survival.

Care is provided by a multidisciplinary team that work to meet the physical, psychological, social, spiritual and cultural needs of fetuses/infants, and their families. Obstetricians, neonatologists, midwives, nurses, social workers and psychologists are often involved. In addition, other pediatric specialists (cardiologists, neurosurgeons...) are consulted if required. However, in smaller maternity units, care can also be provided for infants with very short life expectancy (delivery before viability, anencephaly, etc.) by general obstetricians and gynecologists, midwives and pediatricians appropriately trained.

For every fetus or infant with a life-limiting illness, the goal is to prevent or treat the symptoms of the disease, without separation from his or her parents. And for every family, the goal is to be fully informed, engaged, and involved in their baby's care, right from the diagnosis. Parents are accompanied to find their particular way to welcome their child and let him or her go, and to keep memories during gestation and delivery. They also receive emotional support, assistance with employment and burial concerns, and with other needs. If survival more than 2 to 3 days after birth is expected, care at home is proposed with follow-up by Pediatric Palliative Care teams.

Unfortunately, when fetuses receive the diagnosis of life-limiting illness, parents usually hear the false verdict "Incompatible with life", and are left alone with the clinical plan "There is nothing to do". On the other hand, when specialized support is offered from diagnosis, fetuses and newborn infants receive love and comfort care, while parents frequently recall this journey as peaceful and profoundly meaningful.