

49<sup>th</sup> World Congress on **Advanced Nursing Research**  
&  
27<sup>th</sup> International Conference on **Clinical Pediatrics**

June 10-11, 2019 Berlin, Germany

**Brain death during pregnancy and prolonged corporeal support of the body: A critical discussion**

Lynette (Lynne) Staff and Meredith Nash  
University of Tasmania School of Nursing, Australia

Sophisticated advances in reproductive and medical technologies have altered the boundaries of conception, gestation, birth, life and death, and reworked Western biomedical and cultural understandings of pregnant women and their bodies. In pre-modern times, when a woman was moribund or died during pregnancy or labour, the foetus was excised from her body as soon as death was determined via *sectio in mortua* (translated as 'cutting in death' and the precursor of Caesarean section). This was undertaken to save the infant's soul, and to enable proper burial of the woman and infant. Increasingly reported in medical literature and popular media today, are instances where brain death of a pregnant woman has occurred. Although legally dead, her body is corporeally supported sometimes for very prolonged periods solely to continue foetal life, growth and development until viability, failing foetal health or the deteriorating condition of the maternal body necessitates foetal removal from the body in a procedure that parallels *sectio in mortua*. This discussion provides critical conversation around several issues related to prolonged corporeal support of the body of the brain-dead pregnant woman. These include the difficulties with language when discussing the woman/body/foetus, the impact on nurses and other health professionals of caring for a legally dead body in which a live foetus is growing and developing, the implications for the foetus of growing and developing inside such a body and the absence of long-term follow-up of individuals gestated and born thus.

**Biography**

Lynne has been a midwife for 35 years and has worked in the public and private sectors across all areas of midwifery. She has taught midwifery in both hospital and tertiary settings and is currently a lecturer in midwifery at the University of Tasmania. As PhD candidate, she is particularly interested in history, technology, the sociology of reproduction, and complex bioethical reproductive issues that face health care professionals involved in maternity care. She is a PhD candidate researching the meanings that healthy women experiencing a normal healthy first pregnancy attach to labour and vaginal birth and to CS.

Lynette.Staff@utas.edu.au

**Notes:**