

Community Involvement

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As a health care professional I want to remind you that we have come a long way in making the community aware of the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and we should be very proud of the State of Virginia. Part of our success is due to the cooperation we have had from the medical examiner system and to Dr. Marcella Fierro*, who has really supported our programs. We are also lucky to have such people as Dr. Dorothy Kelly, who is working so hard toward the prevention and cure of SIDS, and the dedication of Dr. Ed Myer in getting the Medical College of Virginia to put on a program to make people aware and knowledgeable of what their response should be.

When a baby dies, the parents are the victims. You, the respondent, by attending a program like this and becoming more knowledgeable, are going to make Sue Rowdon's story the rule rather than the exception, because Sue's case was handled sensitively. It gives me hope that this will be the case for every SIDS parent,

but it takes so much education, caring and feeling; just the touch of a hand. You have no idea what one tiny human touch means at that point.

The resources in the community are there for the SIDS parent to reach out to. I can't stress enough how important education in the emergency room is, because that is where it all happens. I think that every six months there should be training sessions for the emergency room staff because there is such a frequent turnover. There should be a protocol in each emergency room where if a dead baby is brought in, a social worker is called to set in motion the procedures for dealing with SIDS parents.

Where the medical examiner is called in, through Dr. Fierro's persuasion, we now have cooperation throughout the state to notify the parents and the pediatrician; SIDS is noted as the cause of death on the death certificate and the parents receive follow-up help. Again, we have all the resources necessary here in the community; we want to educate, to assist, and to keep the awareness of SIDS moving in the positive direction it is moving in now.

* Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.