

## **Statement of Purpose**

### **Brief History**

Maternl began as Hygeia.org (Hygeia), an international community of compassion, empathy and support for families who have endured the tragedy of miscarriage, stillbirth and neonatal / infant death. This vision was transformed into the Hygeia Foundation, Inc., a IRS approved 501c-3 non-profit organization, founded in 1995 as an online community which grew to exceed 30,000 members and had become among the most enduring online programs of compassion, empathy and support pertaining to Perinatal Loss. The Hygeia Foundation, Inc. is now *Hope after Loss* (<http://hopeafterloss.org>), a thriving non profit, 501-c-3 organization. Maternl is the newest iteration / generation of Hygeia -now a program of Hygeia Health Systems, LLC.

### **Mission**

Maternl shares my life's work as a physician and is my instrument to advocate, heal and comfort. Above all else, Maternl is dedicated to and portrays my hope for maternal health and well-being for *all* and for *all* children world-wide to live and grow and thrive.

I believe that we who have taken the "Oath" to practice our sacred profession of medicine and we who have committed ourselves to the healing arts must do so with the imperative to respect the sanctity of health for all those we treat - with a sense of high privilege and must profess empathy, trust and social justice. My mission includes addressing:

- the need for universal adoption of one standard of care
- disparities and barriers to access to maternal (pre-natal) healthcare services
- disparities in the quality of provider-patient relationships through a compelling need for omnipresent, patient-centered, humanistic care with highest standards of care, quality and safety
- access to resources for pregnancy loss, stillbirth, or neonatal death: imperative and essential bereavement care for healing and well-being for all parents who have experienced such losses
- the use of the power of language to heal. The impact of words and thoughts at difficult times are universal. We are a society of communicators. Through our speech and literature, we portray ourselves, just as paint applied to canvas forms a portrait. We should not underestimate the influence of our words, for they are empowering. In a moment they can help; in less time they can hurt. They can bring peace, and they can create turmoil. A few simple and appropriate words can have inordinate influence.

Maternl assists access to maternal and child healthcare services and resources, comforts and supports all pregnancy and newborn related concerns. Particularly, Maternl supports those who have a complicated pregnancy that might result in a miscarriage including a very early pregnancy loss,

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stillbirth or neonatal death and offers a rich resource of personal writings, thoughts and poetry inclusive of maternal poems, birth poems and poem of loss.

To accomplish these goals, here is what you will find at Maternl:

- The ability to download an original and personalized poem
- A portfolio of original poetry, essays and thoughts
- An online community for pregnancy and newborn loss
- Help with access to and advocacy for prenatal and women's health care
- Access to my personal blog with updated personal thoughts, poems and essays
- A curated keyword and free-text global pregnancy search program which is continually growing

*Unique* to Maternl is the opportunity to re-dedicate an original poem to honor your child (or someone else's child ) and download a personalized, signed poem. One may select a poem written and rededicated for the loss of a pregnancy or newborn or a poem for other occasions to honor, eulogize or celebrate occasions that might be appropriate for the user or for their friends, family or colleagues.

This “request a personalized poem” program is founded on a model of care I have practiced throughout my career: that of writing a letter of condolence when my patients experienced a pregnancy loss including a personalized, original poem which I either sent to them and / or read at their memorial services / funerals. I have many years of experience doing this and the responses from my patients have been universally positive and “healing”. This has enabled me to foster deep and lasting relationships with them. I have been fortunate to have presented this work at local, national, and international meetings and symposiums and it is currently a core element in my lecture series to third-year medical students at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. The online program offers the opportunity:

- for **families** who have experienced these tragic losses to individually download a personalized poem dedicated to their child
- or for **Physicians, Nurse-midwives, Nurse Practitioners or other Health Professionals** to download an appropriate poem and to send to their patients as a personal, empathetic thought when their patients endure these losses.

I believe the impact of words and thoughts at these most difficult of times of loss are powerful and of universal need. As an example, sometime ago I received a note from a father who just had lost his prematurely born daughter to the condition of twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome. One twin died in utero and the remaining twin was born at 25 weeks, gravely ill and on life support systems in the Newborn Intensive Care Unit. After a brave but futile struggle, she, too, died. Her father contacted me

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from England, asking if I could suggest some words to read at the memorial service for his children. I sent a few lines to him and his bereaved wife. In their reply I learned that they placed these words upon the headstone of their twins' grave:

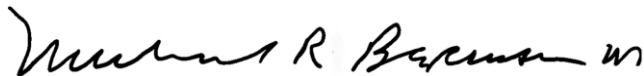
*“Let us not succumb to creation and  
this portent, Upon whose path walk  
The solstice of our darkest The souls of our children;  
hour. Pure as the silence of the  
For it is but a finite point virgin winter,  
Upon an infinite journey Alive with winds of  
Which began with all indomitable hope”*

The program and further information about the poetry and my work can be found at the Maternl website: <http://maternl.org> or in my book, Parenthood Lost: Healing the Pain after Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Death. I have written scores of poems but only include at this time first-lines of five poems each written for a particular but universally common reason for loss. Each poem addresses the **universality** of loss and the **promise of hope**. When a poem is selected, it is dedicated to and *personalized* with the child or parent’s name and signed by me as the author. It will be suitable for framing or just to place in a “memory box” that many families have after their loss. It is available immediately in PDF format and can be printed or sent electronically.

It is my hope that by sharing these poems with users of Maternl at this very difficult time, a healing process can begin even when there is no “cure”. This program is available *pro bono*. to all who choose to use it.

Please visit Maternl at <http://maternl.org> and feel free to contact me with any questions, comments or suggestions.

Thank you.



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 Founder, Author and President  
 Maternl

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