

Death, Dying and Hollywood

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Objectives

- Review how television and movies depict death and dying.
- Evaluate what this depiction means to our patients.
- Discuss how to explain the reality of death and dying to our patients and families.

Wouldn't it be nice.....



Television and Movie "Reality"

- The Resuscitation Scene
- The Dying Patient
- The Death Scene

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

Baywatch Rescue



Study published in the NEJM in 1996 CPR on Television

Success rate

- O Calculated the success rate of CPR on 3 TV shows (ER, Chicago Hope and Rescue 911)
- O Success on TV = 65%, success in real life = 2-30%

Representation

- O65% of the patients that received CPR were children or young adults, in real life elderly patients are the majority
- O Trauma was the cause of the cardiac arrest in 62% of the patients, in real life it is closer to 5-25%

Resuscitation on Grey's Anatomy-Meredith survives with no deficits



Heaven's Prisoners Rescue of a girl who has drowned



Other Problems

- The quality of the CPR being done is often poor
 - OSome people learn CPR from TV
 - Olt doesn't show the traumatic nature of CPR
- There was limited information about survival to discharge
 - OShort term outcomes were the focus of the shows
 - Olf the outcome was shown it was either complete recovery or death

The Miracle of CPR It even works in cartoons!



What does this mean to patients?

- People have unrealistic ideas of CPR/DNR
 O"I thought CPR could bring me back"
- Survey of patients over 62 yrs old
 - O92% received information about CPR from television
 - OPatients also overestimated survival rates
 - OSimilar results have been found in other studies-survey of patients over 74 and patients with COPD

What can we do?

- Have the conversation
 - OStart with "What do you understand about CPR or being DNR"
 - O Explain the realities
 - CPR was originally meant to restart healthy hearts in the event of trauma or arrhythmia
 - After resuscitation (if effective) the patient will end up in the ICU and usually intubated
- You can still use media to help teach
 - OA lot of educational videos exist about CPR
 - O Use examples of more realistic portrayals

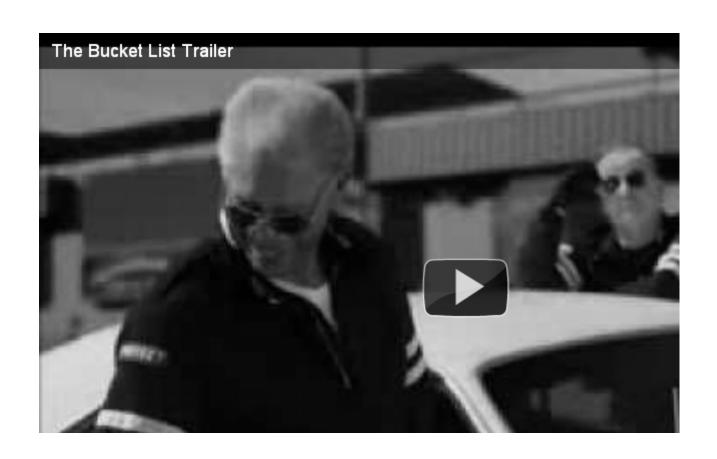
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Good DNR talk Wit-Women dying of Ovarian CA



The Dying Patient

The Bucket List-Two Stage IV Lung Cancer Patients



Tuesdays With Morrie-End Stage ALS patient



Discrepancies

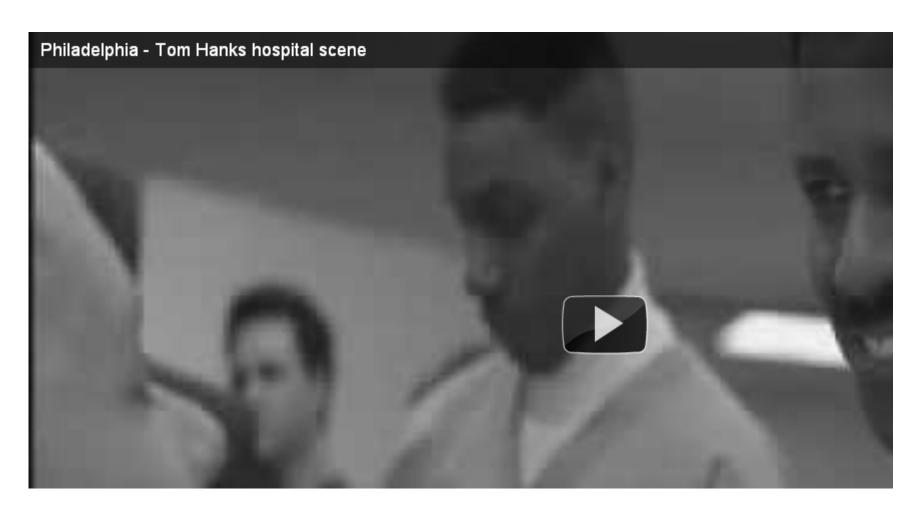
- Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson look pretty darn good for end stage cancer patients
 - OAt the end of The Bucket List,1 patient survives long term and 1 patient dies during brain surgery
- Jack Lemmon was also looking pretty good for less than a week prior to his death of ALS

The Real Morrie





Philadelphia-End Stage AIDS Patient



They can actually get it right!

- Tom Hanks actually looks a lot like he is dying
- There are a good number of independent films/documentaries about real patients that provide a more realistic view
 - O Indestructible
- These are the movies that we can use to help with education
- A study done in college students showed that watching 10 hours of Six Feet Under was equal to a course in death education in changing attitudes about death

The Death Scene

Love Story-Jennifer dies of leukemia



ER-Man dies in the emergency room



Battlestar Galactica-Laura Roslin dies of breast cancer



What is missing from these scenes?

- Symptoms
 - **ODelirium**
 - ODyspnea
 - **OPain**
 - **OSecretions**
- Unresponsiveness
- Weakness
- Sick looking people!

Misperceptions

- The patient will be awake and able to interact until the end (from the Love Story scene)
- Morphine is what kills people (from the ER scene)
- The patient will be able to be active and participate in activities until the end (from the Battlestar scene)

What can we do?

- Similar to what I said for the CPR scenes----education!
- Most people don't really believe everything they see on TV or in the Movies
- Medical professionals can educate the families about what they are seeing
 - O"The Blue Book"

Questions?
Ideas?
Examples?

References

- Can a television series change attitudes about death? a study of college students and six feet under: Schiappa E; Gregg PB; Hewes DE, *Death Studies*, 2004 Jun; 28(5): 459-74 (44 ref)
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 Arnold, Robert; Tulsky, James, 2009