

Panel Discussion Format Questions

Consider the Conversation 2: Stories about Cure, Relief, and Comfort
(Questions for palliative medicine specialists)

In the film's opening sequence, we see an anonymous 15th century quote that is **the Golden Rule of Medicine** and represents the credo of thousands of men and women working in the modern day field of palliative care. It reads, "To cure sometimes, to relieve often, to comfort always – this is our work. This is the first and great commandment. And, the second is like unto it. Thou shalt treat thy patient as thou wouldst thyself be treated." *What is palliative care and how does it help seriously ill patients?*

In **History**, we're introduced to the idea that American medicine's success at fighting disease and extending life has created a new problem. That is, most of us can now expect to die in a place (a hospital or nursing home) and in a way (slowly, incrementally, and with a great deal of suffering), that most wouldn't choose if only asked. *To what extent has this new problem created an opportunity for patients, families and medical professionals?*

In **Fishing**, Allan Hamilton shares the story of Donald, a young man with a brain tumor who had one request of Dr. Hamilton should his prognosis look poor – "I want you to tell me when it's time to go fishing." Dr. Hamilton honored that wish but the patient died the next day, leading him to conclude that being truthful had robbed Donald of hope and killed him. "What I'd do now," Allan states, "is say, you tell me when it's time to go fishing and I'll be there to support you when you think it's time to go fishing." *Is Dr. Hamilton part of the problem or did the medical system fail to give him the skills and support he and Donald needed to cope?*

In **Judy**, Diane Meier introduces us to a therapist undergoing aggressive treatment for brain cancer in New York City, and her oncologist, Dr. "A". *What does this story teach us about the importance of the patient/doctor relationship? How would Allan Hamilton's Fishing story change if someone like Diane Meier was involved?*

In **Naming Reality**, we see Toby Campbell, an oncologist and palliative care physician from the University of Wisconsin, skillfully using communication to navigate the murky waters of severe chronic disease with two cancer patients. *What does this story teach us about the importance of patient/doctor communication?*

What is **advance care planning** and how is that process different from the conversations we saw Dr. Campbell having with his patients in the film?

In **How Doctors Die**, we heard numerous physicians share beautiful, informed, and detailed responses to the question, "When it's your time to die, where would you like to be and with whom? What kind of care would you want or not want?" Much to the producers' amazement, all of the doctors had given the question significant thought and had very specific plans – none of which had anything to do with hospitals, nursing homes, and aggressive treatment. Their answers teach us that few individuals are more familiar with the pros and cons of life sustaining treatments than doctors. *And, it begs the question, how can we, as medical professionals, help patients and families arrive at a similar destination?*