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# The New York Times

## A Talk Before Dying

Readers discuss coverage for doctor-patient conversations about end-of-life care.

**TO THE EDITOR:** Re “Coverage for End-of-Life Talks Gaining Ground” (front page, Aug. 31): When we are coming into this world, there are multiple medical visits for our mothers and preparation for the birthing event. Not so at the end of life. We need to accept that we are going to die, and that we are responsible for beginning that conversation — with our families and our doctors.

Planning for the end of our lives should be a conversation that takes place over time. Throughout our lives we define what we believe to be a quality to our lives — what we do, how we live, how we share our lives. How we face the end of our lives is not a separate category of our life.

Having worked with people who are facing the end of their lives, as a geriatric care manager for the last 20 years, I know that it is much easier to begin that conversation early in the process of getting to know my clients, rather than waiting until they have received a terminal diagnosis. Discussing their values and philosophy on life can be important when the time comes to talk about the nuts and bolts of the end of life. Under what circumstances would you want to be taken by ambulance to the hospital? Have you thought about cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and do you know what that means?

Our dying should not come as a surprise to us. We should know that it can come at any time. We should be prepared.

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Irvington, N.Y., Sept. 1, 2014