

## **Death Interrupted** Podcast Episode, Radiolab

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### **Summary<sup>1</sup>**

In 2022 Dr. Blair Bigham publishes his book *Death Interrupted: How Modern Medicine Is Complicating the Way We Die*. The book is based on his professional experience working with patients in the ICU and describes how modern medicine can sometimes prolong suffering and complicate the way people die. Just as his book reaches the best-seller list, Dr. Bigham's father gets diagnosed with end-stage pancreatic cancer. Suddenly, Bigham finds himself pushing for everything to be done to prolong his father's life.

Duration: 25 min. 50 sec.

Aired: December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

Produced by Simon Adler

Reported by Latif Nasser

Link to episode: [Death Interrupted \(radiolab.org\)](https://radiolab.org/episodes/death-interrupted)

### ***Questions for discussion:***

- Discuss Bigham's reaction to his father's diagnosis.
  - Did his reaction and subsequent actions surprise you?
  - Why or why not?
- If you were the treating physician, how would you have handled this situation?
- If you were the treating physician, what would you have said to the son?
- Bigham's father was able to express his wishes and tell the healthcare providers that he didn't want to proceed with aggressive interventions to treat an untreatable cancer. Imagine a similar clinical situation with a patient who doesn't have capacity, has not previously expressed wishes about treatment, and has a history of a conservative approach to healthcare decision-making. In this case, the patient's SDM wants to continue to try further interventions.
  - How would you address that situation?

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from program website.