Aging and Serious Illness: Lessons from the GeriPal Blog and Podcast

Alex Smith, MD, MS, MPH
UCSF Division of Geriatrics
GeriPal Podcast
ePrognosis
JAGS

GeriPal: A Geriatrics and Palliative Care Podcast for Every Healthcare Professional

- Started Blog 2009: tension between Geriatrics and Palliative Care
 - Geriatrics: Palliative care "stealing" their fellows
 - Palliative care: We learned geriatrics in residency and fellowship
 - We (Eric and I) believed: more similarity in mission, more to gain together
- Multiple blog posts per week
- Content is king
- But...people stopped blogging

GeriPal: A Geriatrics and Palliative Care Podcast for Every Healthcare Professional

- Started Podcast 2016
 - New to podcasts
 - "bring your guitar"
 - First podcast: bed alarms
- Evolved
 - Weekly podcast
 - 1-4 guests/podcast
- Content
 - Authors of high impact articles
 - Guests doing cutting edge clinical or policy work at the "frontier"
 - Take song request from every guest, usually related to topic, play on guitar/keyboard and sing at start and end of Podcast



GeriPal 300th Episode: Ask Me Anything Hot Ones Style

Home ▶ GeriPal 300th Episode:...



GeriPal: A Geriatrics and Palliative Care Podcast for Every Healthcare Professional

- Target Audience: Clinicians care for older adults; or serious illness
- Funding: Offering CME and donations (Production costs, Eric and I not paid)
- ~10k downloads per podcast measured 1-year post-release
- >4 milion total downloads
- Twitter @GeriPalBlog: ~12k followers
- Bluesky 1K followers
- Facebook: ~3.6k followers
- YouTube: ~2k subscribers
- Email: ~5k subscribers **transcribe** all podcasts
- TikTok: 86 followers

GeriPal: A Geriatrics and Palliative Care Podcast for Every Healthcare Professional

- Going to review key lessons from popular blog posts and podcast
- By domain
- Elevator pitch style!

Communication

Miscommunication in Medicine: A podcast with Shunichi Nakagawa, Abby Rosenberg and Don Sullivan

Home ▶ Miscommunication in Medicine:...



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Miscommunication in Medicine

- What is meant, said, heard, and interpreted: different
 - Surgeon wants to convey all visible tumors were removed during surgery
 - Says, "We got it all."
 - Patient & family may hear that cancer is gone



Pinned



Shunichi Nakagawa @snakagawa_md · Feb 13, 2022



When a patient requests to drink cold ice water before removing high-flow nasal cannula (to withdraw life support), that will be the last one in his life.

- Don't thicken it.
- Make sure he gets what he wants.
- Don't ask anybody. It won't take long. Go get it by yourself.



1 3.7K

♥ 35K

ılı





Shunichi Nakagawa @snakagawa_md · Feb 13, 2022



Replying to @snakagawa_md

If he/she wants a beer or wine or whatever, I would be more than happy to run to a liquor shop.

I can pay for that.



1 270

♥ 11K

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Clinical Practice of Geriatrics or Palliative Care

What if palliative care doesn't save money?

All Posts, Health Policy, Palliative Care > What if palliative...

- October 1, 2009 A GeriPal C All Posts
 - 🖰 GeriPal 🗀 All Posts, Health Policy, Palliative Care



15 years ago, Drs. Zeke and Linda Emanuel wrote an article in the New England Journal of Medicine titled, "The Economics of Dying – The Illusion of Cost Savings at the End of Life." They present the potential cost savings if all persons who died in a particular year executed an advance directive, chose hospice, and refused in-hospital treatment at the end of life. Savings? 3% of health care spending, max. Max. Their conclusion:

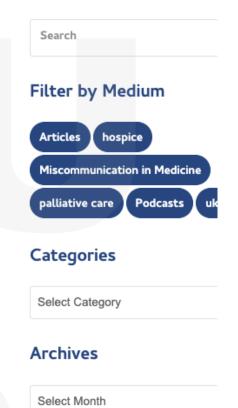
Fast food-style palliative care consults found inneffective, may cause PTSD

♦ Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM) > Fast food-style palliative...



July 6, 2016
 Alex Smith
 Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM)

by: Alex Smith, MD. Alex Smith was formerly a palliative care attending at UCSF. Now that his work has been shown to be ineffective and possibly harmful, he is seeking new employment. If you know of a job for a former palliative care physician, please tweet Alex @AlexSmithMD.



Stepped Palliative Care: A Podcast with Jennifer Temel, Chris Jones, and Pallavi Kumar

Home > All Posts, Palliative Care > Stepped Palliative Care:...



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Song request: Galileo, Indigo Girls





Telehealth vs In-Person Palliative Care: A Podcast with Joseph Greer, Lynn Flint, Simone Rinaldi, and Vicki Jackson

Home ▶ Telehealth vs In-Person...



Workforce Shortage Palliative Care

- Not enough specialist palliative care providers to provide care to all seriously ill patients
- Best evidence for palliative care
 - Outpatient setting
 - Monthly PC visits
- Study found that PC only "when needed" (step up) not inferior to routine PC in lung cancer
- Second study found telepalliative care not inferior to in person PC, though less time on hospice

COVID19 in Prisons: Podcast with Brie Williams, Adnan Khan, & Eric Maserati-E Abercrombie

Home ▶ COVID19 in Prisons:...







Hospice in Prison Part 1: An interview with Michele DiTomas and **Keith Knauf**

Home ▶ Hospice in Prison...







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Hospice in Prison Part 2: An interview with the Pastoral Care Workers

Home ▶ Hospice in Prison...



June 29, 2023

Song request: Down the hall, Bonnie Rait

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Aging and Dying Behind Bars

- Are you the same person you were 15 years ago?
- Challenges
 - 8/10 largest COVID outbreaks: Prisons
 - Prisoners aging rapidly: dementia, disability
- Volunteering hospice: incarcerated individuals with meaning/purpose

Palliative Care for Mental Illness: A Podcast with Dani Chammas and Brent Kious

Home ▶ Palliative Care for...



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Song request: Only Children, Jason Isbell

All Posts, Mental Health, Palliative Care

December 19, 2024

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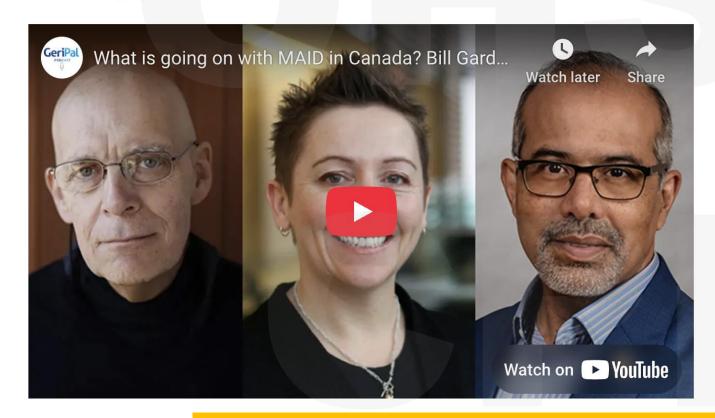
PC for Serious Mental Illness

- What does it mean to take a palliative approach to serious mental illness (e.g treatment refractory depression, schizophrenia, or anorexia)?
- Challenges to psychiatrists: trained to eliminate sx's
- Instead focus on goals: allow some hallucinations if antipsychotics causing dysphoria; don't hospitalize person with eating disorder
- Should they receive hospice? Medical Aid in Dying?

Medical Aid in Dying

What is going on with MAID in Canada? Bill Gardner, Leonie Herx, & Sonu Gaind

Home ▶ What is going...



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Song request: Cortez the Killer, Neil Young





California vs Canada

- Similar population size
- Both legalized MAID 2016
- MAID deaths in California: about 1000/year
- MAID deaths in Canada: 1,000 in first year, 15,000 in 2023 (5% of all deaths)
- MAID in Canada
 - Euthanasia
 - Allowed for non-terminal medical conditions (including disability)
 - Considering allowing: children & serious mental illness

Hastening Death by Stopping Eating and Drinking: Hope Wechkin, Thaddeus Pope, & Josh Briscoe

Home ▶ Hastening Death by...



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Hastening death

- Hope Wechkin: Minimal comfort feeding in adv dementia
 - Middle way between complete withholding of food/fluid (seems cruel), and routine offering of food and fluid
- Thaddeus Pope: voluntary stopping eating and drinking in early dementia makes patient eligible for 1) hospice; and 2) medical aid in dying
- Joshua Briscoe and Eric Widera push back: medical aid in dying for patients with irreversible & incurable illness.

Advance Care Planning & Physician's Orders for Life Sustaining Treatment (POLST)



Advance Care Planning is Wrong: Podcast with Sean Morrison

August 27, 2020

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING · ETHICS · GERIATRICS · HEALTH POLICY ACTION COMMITTEE (HPAC) · PALLIATIVE CARE

Song request: We Won't be Fooled Again, The Who

What's wrong with ACP

- "For every complex problem there is a solution which is clear, simple and wrong" H L Mencken
- Advance directives intuitively appealing: alignment of treatments at EOL by patient previously expressed wishes
- Treatment choices near EOL not logical, linear, predictable
 - Complex, uncertain, emotionally laden, fluid



Advance Care Planning is Wrong: Podcast with Sean Morrison

August 27, 2020

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING · ETHICS · GERIATRICS · HEALTH POLICY ACTION COMMITTEE (HPAC) · PALLIATIVE CARE





Advance Care Planning is So Right: Podcast with Rebecca Sudore and Ryan McMahan

October 8, 2020

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING · GERIATRICS · HOSPICE ·

Song request: Wake me Up When September Ends, Green Day

ACP is so right

- Asking too much of ACP: goal concordant care
- Purpose of advance care planning is to help family and surrogates
 prepare
 - To make in-the-moment decisions
 - Feel at peace with decisions around time of death
 - Less PTSD and complicated grief after the death



Advance Care Planni Podcast with Sean M

August 27, 2020

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING · ETHICS POLICY ACTION COMMITTEE (HPAC)





Guests: Susan Hickman Sean Morrison Rebecca Sudore Bob Arnold

Advance Care Planning Discussion

Advance Care Planning Discussion: Susan Hickman, Sean Morrison, Rebecca Sudore, and Bob Arnold

March 24, 2022

Song request: We Can Work It Out, Beatles





are Planning is So Right: rith Rebecca Sudore and ahan

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EP211

ANNING GERIATRICS HOSPICE



Time to Remove Feeding Tubes from POLST: Podcast with Susan Tolle and Elizabeth Eckstrom

Home ▶ Time to Remove...



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February 15, 2019 Alex Smith

Advance Care Planning, Geriatrics, Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM),

Portable Medical Orders (POLST)

Song request: Eat It, Weird Al

POLST and Feeding Tubes

- 1990 Susan Tolle created POLST Physicians Orders for Life Sustaining Treatments
- Form for emergency situations: code status, goals statement, feeding tubes?!?
- When does the EMS provider says, "Quick! Get the PEG tube kit! We need to insert a PEG tube stat!"
- Pushback from national POLST: nudges doctors to address feeding tubes with nursing home and frail patients

POLST Evidence and Update: Kelly Vranas, Abby Dotson, Karl Steinberg, and Scott Halpern

Home ▶ POLST Evidence and...



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- Alex Smith Song request: No Hard Feelings, Avette Brothers October 19, 2023
- All Posts, Portable Medical Orders (POLST)

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Evidence for POLST?

- Observational studies: those with POLST indicating DNR and comfort care less likely to go to ICU
 - But likely reflects underlying preferences, not POLST
- POLST has face validity and anecdotal evidence
 - Some of those avoided ICU stays were due to POLST
 - How many have completed POLST?
 - How many felt, "So glad we completed that POLST"?
- Should quality metrics be based on POLST completion?
 CA 1st to mandate POLST completion in NH 2010

Stuff we that We Shouldn't Do

GeriPal Taste Test: Part I Liquid Bowel Preps

www.geripal.org



Dumb Medicine: Screening for Cancer in Patients already Diagnosed with Incurable Cancer

All Posts, Communication, Screening > Dumb Medicine: Screening...

- October 13, 2010 A GeriPal All Posts, Communication, Screening

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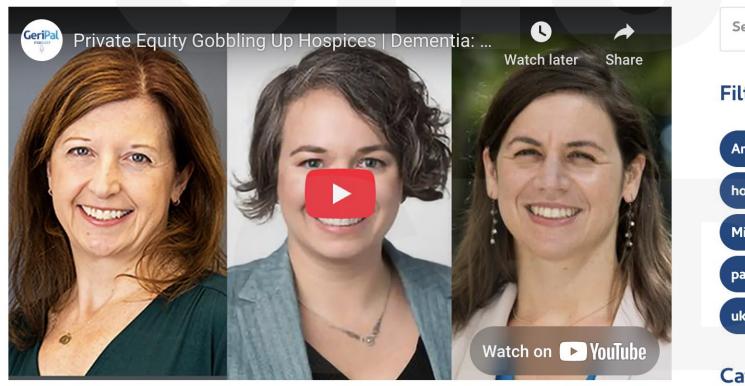
I used to get sports illustrated, and my favorite column was titled "this weeks sign that the apocalypse is upon us." Well, today JAMA published the medical equivalent.

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Private Equity Gobbling Up Hospices plus Hospice and Dementia: Melissa Aldridge, Krista Harrison, & Lauren Hunt

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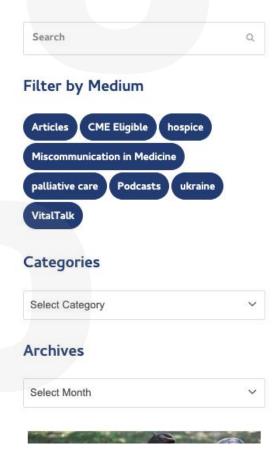
Guidelines or Goals in Heart Failure: A Podcast with Parag Goyal, Nicole Superville, and Matthew Shuster

Home > All Posts, End-of-Life, Quality of Life > Guidelines or Goals...

October 17, 2024



Song request: Medication, The Collection



Substitution

- Guideline Directed Medical Therapy (GDMT)
 - Expanding list of recommended medications
- Guests (PCP and 2 cardiologists) argued goals should drive care more than guidelines
- "Substitution" Don't just start a new med: substitute the new med for another. Try to discontinue a medication for each medication started.



The Thickened Liquid Challenge - #ThickenedLiquidChallenge

★ ► Geriatrics, Hospice and Palliative Medicine (HPM) ► The Thickened Liquid...



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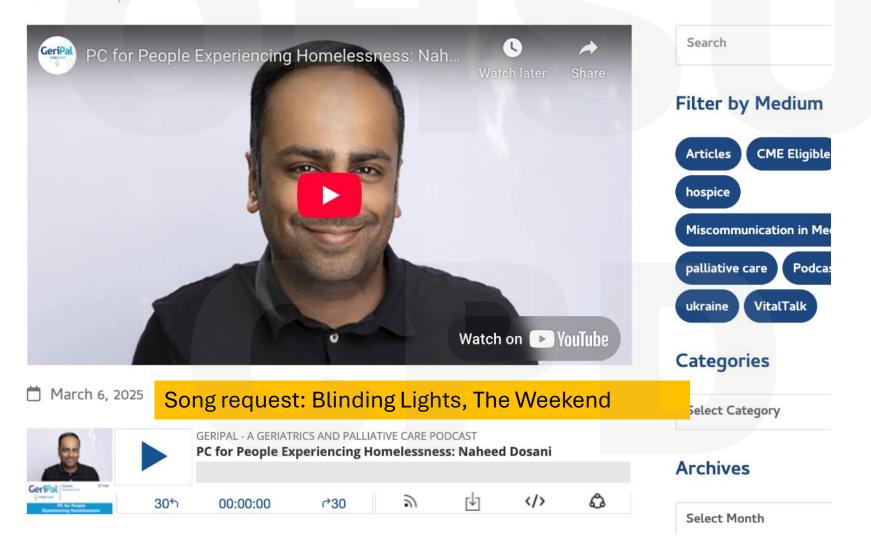
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#thickenedliquidchallenge

Stuff we Should Do

PC for People Experiencing Homelessness: Naheed Dosani

Home ▶ PC for People...



PC for People Experiencing Homelessness

- Apotheosis of great palliative care
 - Total Pain Cicely Saunders
 - Social suffering recognized by Balfour Mount

EMS Intervention to Reduce Falls: Carmen Quatman and Katie Quatman-Yates

Home ▶ All Posts, Geriatrics ▶ EMS Intervention to...



February 15, 2024

Song request: Eye of the Tiger, Survivor

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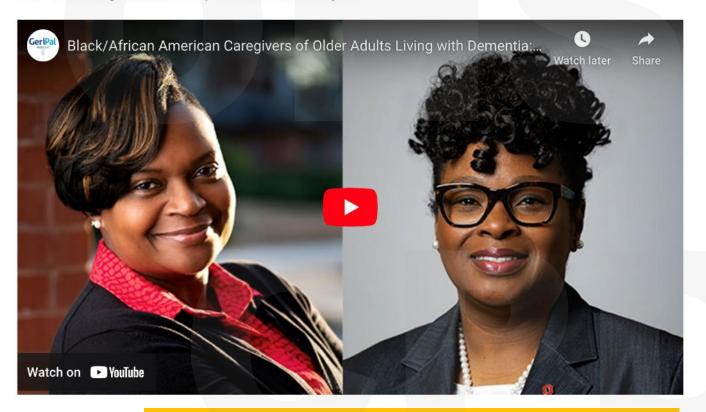
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Reducing falls: partnering with EMS

- EMS providers go into homes people who fell, lift assistance
 - Loose carpets
 - No handrails
 - Obstacles
- Repeat same patients, over and over and over
- Held class: install grab bars, tack carpets
- Word of mouth: get this too!
- Calls for falls dropped!

Black/African American Caregivers of Older Adults Living with Dementia: Fayron **Epps and Karen Moss**

Home ▶ All Posts, Caregiver, Dementia, Diversity ▶ Black/African American Caregivers...



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September 21, 202: Song request: I'll Fly Away, Traditional Gospel

Caregivers mentoring caregivers

- Former Black/African American caregivers: peer support for current caregivers. Triple win:
 - Bereaved caregiver: generative, share story, give back
 - Current caregiver: connects, share experiences, lessons learned
 - Person with dementia: benefits from improved efficacy of caregiver



Electronic Frailty Indexes: Kate Callahan, Ariela Orkaby, & Dae Kim

Home ▶ Electronic Frailty Indexes:...



March 21, 2024

Song request: Fragile, Sting





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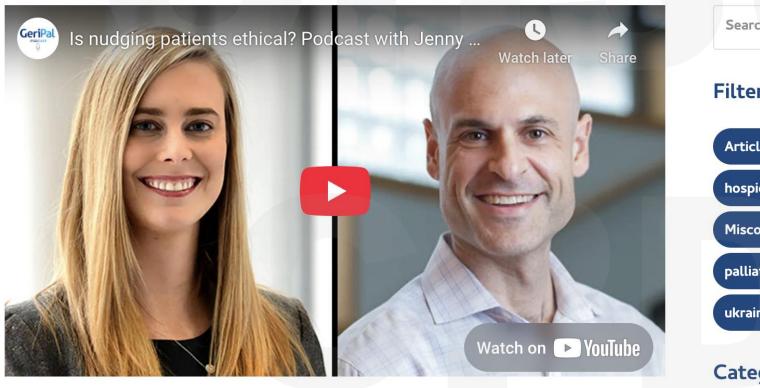
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Why Measure Frailty Help Me Choose a Frailty Tool

Overview of Frailty Tools

Is nudging patients ethical? Podcast with Jenny Blumenthal-**Barby and Scott Halpern**

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September 30, 2021

Song request: Don't Think Twice, It's All Right, Bob Dylan







An LVAD Discussion

Your doctor flashes a toothy smile and tells you that he too, like you, studied philosophy as an undergraduate and enjoys spending time hiking in a local state park.

He talks with you about an upcoming LVAD decision, discussing the risks and benefits. Then the doctor says, "Most people like us who are young and active, would never get the device, at least not until it's the last resort. But I don't have to tell you that. You've seen a lot."

Your doctor says that he will tell the rest of the medical team to hold off before going into that direction but that you should let him know if you feel differently after you've had a chance to review the decision aid.

He leaves a form with you that has decline the LVAD checked as the default, but lets you know that if you want to, you can scratch it out and change the selection.

An LVAD Discussion

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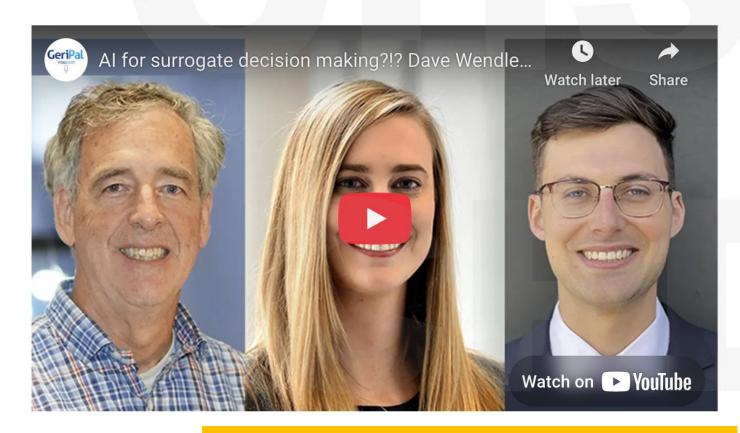
Messenger effect

Social Norms & Appeal to Ego

Status quo/default bias

Al for Surrogate Decision Making?!? Dave Wendler, Jenny Blumenthal-Barby, Teva Brender

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Al to help surrogates who are unsure

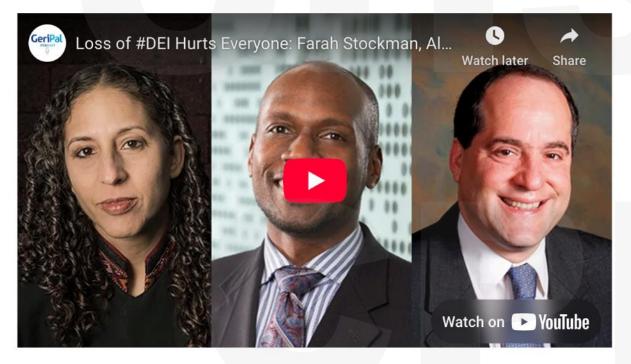
- Imagine: seriously ill patient, surrogate at a loss for what to do
- Al Avatar created from prior patient healthcare encounters
- Play back conversations in patients own voice
- Input from spending records, social media
- Predict: most people active like your loved one would not want to risk long term disability associated with continued life-sustaining treatment
- JAMA IM editor: interesting, scary, probably inevitable

Thank You!

Alexander.Smith@ucsf.edu

Loss of DEI Hurts Everyone: Farah Stockman, Ali Thomas, Ken Covinsky

Home ▶ Loss of DEI...



April 17, 2025

Alex Smith All Posts, Diversity





GERIPAL - A GERIATRICS AND PALLIATIVE CARE PODCAST

Loss of DEI Hurts Everyone: Farah Stockman, Ali Thomas, Ken Co...

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Between Two Urns: Undertaker Thomas Lynch

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COVID in Long Term Care: Podcast with Jim Wright and David Grabowski

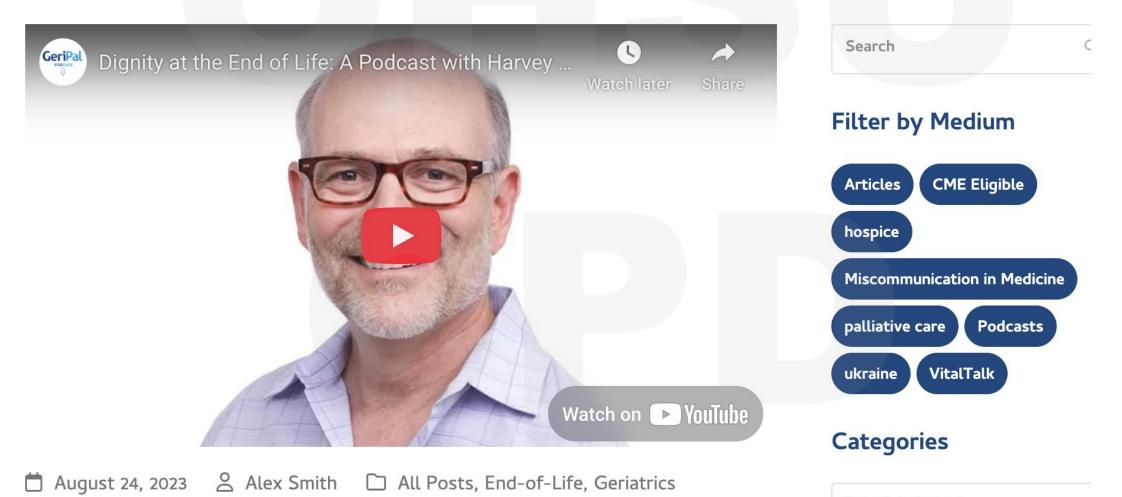
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Dignity at the End of Life: A Podcast with Harvey Chochinov

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So yes, it's true that there is currently no evidence for routine brief palliative care consults with surrogates of chronically critically ill patients where you don't consult until after treatment decisions are made and goals established and only see the patient once and don't have a full interdisciplinary team or work with the rest of the ICU team. Fine.

Palliative care clinicians, don't give up your day jobs! There's more research to be done here.