



# LEGACY MATTERS

*Because your life counts and what you leave behind is the evidence of the life you lived. Why not tell it your way.*

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## DYING BY DEGREES

In [Dying by Degrees](#), Paula Span in *The New Old Age* reviews Dr. Ira Byock's new book, [The Best Care Possible: A Physician's Quest to Transform Care Through the End of Life](#).

Ira Byock has been writing books about the way Americans die since 1998, when he published “Dying Well.” For most of that time, he has been appalled.

He still is. Dr. Byock, director of palliative medicine at the Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, N.H., pulls no punches in his new book, “The Best Care Possible: A Physician’s Quest to Transform Care Through the End of Life.” [The American way of dying, he points out, involves too much suffering for both patients and families, and routinized medical response with not enough individualized care. It means not enough listening, not enough support for families, way too much expense. “A national disgrace,” the author calls it in his introduction.](#)

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What makes Dr. Byock’s book particularly valuable is the chance to eavesdrop on the doctors we’re often quick to blame. He tells what it’s like on the other end of the stethoscope.

Physicians who comment here sometimes argue that they’re more than willing to stop futile treatments, to refer patients with advanced disease to hospice care so that they can die gently at home. It’s often families, they report, who angrily demand that patients remain in intensive care units, that doctors try one more procedure and then another, as though yielding to death were a moral failing.

Posted by Jill Fallon at 7:51 PM | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(0\)](#)