

Discussion Guide for Podcast Listeners *Based on Dr. Ira Byock's White Paper: "A Strategic Path Forward for Hospice and Palliative Care"*

Purpose of This Guide This printable discussion guide is designed to help you host meaningful conversations about the current challenges and future possibilities for hospice and palliative care in the U.S., based on Dr. Byock's 2025 white paper.

1. Overview and Summary Dr. Byock's paper outlines a strategic path forward for hospice and palliative care, highlighting challenges such as:

- Declining care quality in some for-profit hospices
- Lack of enforceable clinical standards
- Inaccessible quality data
- Stalled progress in mainstream healthcare integration

He proposes a four-part strategy:

1. Publish clinical and programmatic standards
 2. Make meaningful data transparent
 3. Promote quality-based competition
 4. Embrace hospice's authentic mission: expert care that fosters well-being
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2. Reading and Conversation Prompts Use the following questions to guide your group discussion:

A. Problems and Root Causes

- What was most surprising or concerning in this paper?
- How have you seen the impact of for-profit or low-quality hospice care?
- Do you agree that the field has lost sight of its founding values?

B. The Strategic Path Forward

1. Clinical Standards

- Why are clear standards essential?
- What risks exist without shared standards?

2. Transparency of Data

- How could accessible data empower patients and families?
- What kind of data should be shared?

3. Competition Based on Quality

- Can competition raise standards without harming care?
- How can we prevent misuse of quality metrics?

4. Authentic Mission

- What does it mean to support well-being at end of life?
- How does your experience with hospice reflect (or not reflect) this mission?

3. Personal and Group Reflection

- Have you or someone close to you experienced hospice or palliative care?
- What worked well, and what could have been better?
- How does this paper make you feel—hopeful, frustrated, motivated?

4. Action Ideas

If you're a clinician or provider:

- Advocate for the adoption of clear standards in your practice.
- Initiate conversations about quality improvement.

If you're a caregiver or community member:

- Share this article with others in your community.
- Ask local hospices what quality standards they follow.

If you work in policy or advocacy:

- Support reforms that increase transparency and accountability.

- Encourage collaboration between professional organizations.
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5. Quotes for Inspiration or Social Sharing

- "The moment has come for the clinical specialties ... to chart a strategic path forward."
 - "Efforts must start with zero tolerance of fraudulent business and clinical practices that harm vulnerable patients."
 - "Hospice and palliative care's authentic brand ... is distinguished by its practice of intentionally fostering well-being."
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6. Closing Reflection Ask your group:

- Which part of the strategy speaks most to you?
- What small step can you take to support quality end-of-life care in your community?

Thank you for helping spread awareness and compassion in end-of-life care.

For access to the article: Download and read the full white paper here: <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/epdf/10.1089/pmr.2025.0030>