

[Sample Article #2]

HEART-TO-HEART: Caring for the Dying

A series of three hour-long radio documentaries

Everyone is going to die, but few of us are willing to think about it. We tend to fight death as an adversary rather than embracing it as a natural part of life. Unfortunately, many Americans pay a price for this in both physical and emotional suffering.

As the population ages and many of us confront the passing of parents and loved ones, we need a more thoughtful public conversation about end of life care. How can we help people live well in the face of death? Can we make the process of dying a meaningful experience free from excessive fear and pain? *Heart-to-Heart* raises these questions and explores some of the answers.

Drawn from over 80 hours of recordings, *Heart-to-Heart* shares personal stories and remarkable moments with people facing death and those who are helping them along the journey. It looks at the care given by doctors, hospitals, clergy, family and friends to people at the end of life. *Heart-to-Heart* examines the barriers to good care that arise from cultural misunderstanding, from fear over the use of morphine, from lack of funding to pay for good programs. Each program provides ideas, examples and inspiration for those who are searching for a good path on the journey to death.

- **Richard Buike's cancer has wrapped itself around nerve cells, which can cause incredible pain.** But unlike many Americans, who die today in needless agony, Richard's pain is controlled with high doses of opioid drugs. The first program in the series, *Beyond Pain*, focuses on how fear of addiction and the "War on Drugs" undermine pain management at the end of life.
- **Brittney is thirteen. Cystic fibrosis threatens to take her life before she has a chance to grow up.** Wise beyond her years, Brittney faces her fear of death and her frustrations with being so sick. Her mom is helping her make some hard decisions about getting a lung transplant. The second program, *Children Sometimes*

Die, is about children who die and the support they and their families need during this unbelievably difficult experience.

- **Regina Dyer, an African-American woman, is dying of breast cancer.** She feels that stereotypes about Black people color the treatment she gets from doctors and hospitals. *Cultural Perspectives* looks at the influence of culture, race and religion on dying; how the assumptions behind "good end-of-life care" do not necessarily match the needs of people who are not white and middle class.

Series producer/director Claire Schoen, has been creating award-winning documentaries in radio, film and video for over 25 years. Her previous radio credits include:

- *Voices in Exile*, a 4-part radio series about undocumented Salvadoran refugees, winner of the NFCB Golden Reel
- *Is Our Fate in our Genes?* an hour-long radio documentary on genetic engineering which was part of the series, *The DNA Files*, winner of both Peabody and Dupont-Columbia awards

Heart-to-Heart: Caring for the Dying is compelling, sound-rich radio that brings wisdom, compassion, and common sense to this vitally important dialogue. While the stories are personal, the themes are universal as we all struggle to come to terms with the passing of friends, family members, and ultimately our selves.