



# HOSPICE OF NORTH IDAHO

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Hospice Since 1981

Hospice of North Idaho  
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September 14, 2018

PINEHURST -- Each time Hospice of North Idaho offers the PBS Frontline documentary "Being Mortal" in its community, a different take away rises to the top for attendees. This time, on a sunny, mid-day in Pinehurst, Idaho, that take away message was that families just want to be able to have a good, goodbye. And for themselves, when it's their time, they want to say goodbye with dignity, courage, physical comfort, and have time to do so.

"We may not always have the time we want," considered one attendee. She remembered that her late husband used to leave her loving notes before his work shift. Now, she's encouraging all families to do the same because that memory means so much to her.

The documentary "Being Mortal" launches from Dr. Atul Gawande's book. The thought-provoking film revealed a variety of approaches from both physicians and patients in discussing tough, end of life decisions. How they discussed plans, treatment, and quality of life plays a big role in the experience patients and families have.

Kim Ransier, Hospice of North Idaho Executive Director of the 37-year non-profit, hosted a discussion between community attendees and three, local clinical panelists. Panelists were the Hospice's Medical Director, Dr. Robert Ancker, Hospice's Director of Social Services, Kelly Rey LCSW, and local physician, Dr. Robert Lakko.

The discussion surfaced at least two factors that people felt were important to ensure a good ending. First, being prepared with advance directives and making sure the family knows about them. Second, asking direct, albeit difficult, questions to physicians.

"I think we should always ask the big questions. Be proactive about it." commented one guest.

Prepared or not, it can be difficult when the person dying does not want to share their end of life journey with their family, as offered in a personal story by one attendee.

Kim Ransier adds, "This is a perfect time to ask Hospice to provide guidance. Our social workers provide an experienced, neutral voice. This can help smooth-out difficult conversations. We include support for the family when these decisions are tough on them, too."

Attendees were awed by the varying approaches and outcomes confirmed in the documentary. They reflected on the physicians who were too optimistic and correlated the struggle that their patients had with facing death.

Hospice and palliative care trained physicians understand the importance of being compassionate and candid which gives chance for peaceful goodbyes.

As a Board-Certified Hospice and Palliative Care physician, doctor Ancker added, "We tend to look at trends of how the symptoms are progressing for each person, to better gauge their status."

A few members of the group offered discussion about some very difficult experiences with family deaths.

Local physician, Robert Lakko offered, "Physicians are learning more about how to better handle end of life care, and they are changing their approaches. We are becoming better educators, and this supports us in helping our patients make their own decisions."

The next "Being Mortal" community event will be hosted by Hospice of North Idaho on Tuesday, Sept. 18 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. in St. Maries at Benewah Community Hospital board room. This free event will also offer local panelists.