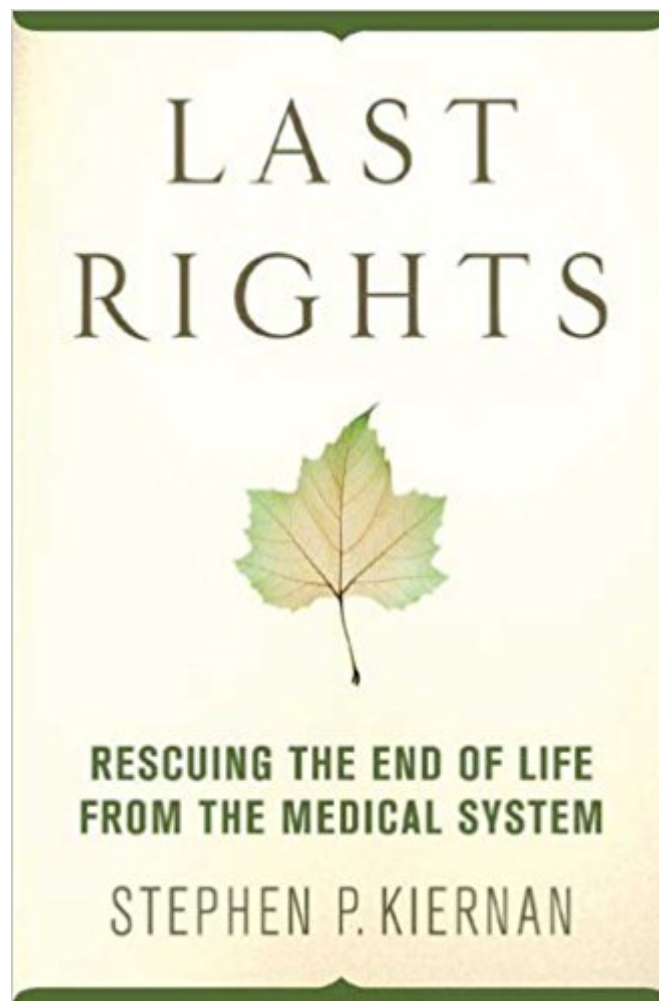




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Last Rights: Rescuing The End Of Life From The Medical System



Synopsis

“This country is fairly crowded with doctors, families, and patients—all possessed of good intentions—failing to achieve the simple goal of allowing people to die with dignity and grace.” In the 1970s, most Americans died swiftly and brutally: of heart attacks, strokes, cancer, or in accidents. But in the past three decades, medical advances have extended our lives and changed the way we die. In *Last Rights*, Stephen Kiernan reveals the disconnect between how patients want to live the end of life—pain free, functioning mentally and physically, surrounded by family and friends—and how the medical system continues to treat the dying—with extreme interventions, at immense cost, and with little regard to pain, human comforts, or even the stated wishes of patients and families. Backed with surveys, interviews, and intimate portraits of people from all walks of life, from the dying and their families to the doctors and nurses who care for them, this book will be for our time what Elizabeth Kubler-Ross’s books were for a previous generation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review Anyone who has stood helplessly by as physicians insisted that a battery of tests and interventions could prolong the life of a loved one, only to see those expensive efforts fail, is certain to be moved by Kiernan’s presentation. While his assertion that the American way of dying has changed only during the last 30 years may be debatable, there is no question that the process of dying has undergone a radical makeover. It has become, too often, a parade of last-ditch, state-of-the-art medical interventions, to the direct detriment of the dying person and his or her

family and friends. Those who have a terminal illness, Kiernan says, deserve to die quietly, in their own homes, surrounded by loved ones and as pain-free as possible. He makes it sound simple enough, and a lot cheaper than the currently popular, if futile, pricey hospital heroics that prolong little more than misery. The problem is that American medical schools devote more time to teaching students about diseases not even found in the U.S. than to preparing them to work with terminal patients. Doctors, therefore, are ill equipped in every way to accompany a patient down the path to a serene death. A nice polemic, even without practical advice on assuring one's own peaceful demise. Donna Chavez

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"Damn, I wish I'd had this book before my own father died. Part a guide to thinking through the policy questions surrounding the end of life, and part an informal handbook for helping with the deaths of your own loved ones, it also offers a final and supreme gift: the chance to begin thinking about what your own life means in the context of its inevitable end."---Bill McKibben author of *The End of Nature* "With an uncommon mix of stories and scholarship, Stephen Kiernan has described the challenges that remain at life's end, despite efforts to reform care over the past few decades. With candor, clarity, and an advocate's sense of urgency, he seeks to understand why our acute-care system has been so resistant to change and how we can infuse greater humanity to life's final chapter."---Joseph J. Fins, M.D., F.A.C.P., Chief of the Division of Medical Ethics, Weill Medical College of Cornell University, and author of *A Palliative Ethic of Care: Clinical Wisdom at Life's End* "Last Rites paints a frightening picture of the disorganized, deficient, and disastrous ways many people are cared for and die. Thankfully, Kiernan goes beyond exposé to uncover hopeful progress and practical ways to protect and nurture the people we love. Kiernan's Last Rites is to end-of-life care today what Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed* was to car safety in the 1960s. This is one book that America must read!"---Ira Byock, M.D., Professor of Palliative Medicine, Dartmouth Medical School, and author of *Dying Well* and *The Four Things That Matter Most*

This book was just what was needed to reassure our family that our decision for Hospice care was the right course for our elderly parent's end of life. It contained so many good suggestions that we were able to act upon. It helped us all cope with our loss, both before and after the actual death. I recommend this book HIGHLY if you are facing a similar situation. The constant focus is on Quality of life and comfort during one's last days, just what my father wanted! Very reassuring!

Powerful book. Bought extra copies for colleagues. May surprise you. Marti Smith, Hospice

Chaplain. UCC. Works with bereavement as well.

This book advanced my understanding of the dilemmas facing my parents and, unless this becomes a political issue (and quickly) will also be part of my not-so-distant future. What's the matter with doctors is a question nearly as perplexing as "What's the Matter with Kansas?" But this book answers it - and helps prepare us for somehow getting around it, when the time comes.

most people of mature years are loathe to think of what their final weeks or months are likely to be like. This book puts many of these issues in perspective, and I would put it in the category of "required reading" for everyone over fifty. The author has rich experience of dealing with people who either were reasonably well prepared for their last days, or were not prepared at all. This book can help put you in the right category...

An excellent book on an important topic-a thorough introduction to important end of life planning.

A great read for anyone interested in the state of the US healthcare system and its impact on the care of those suffering from a terminal illness. This book intersperses quantitative data with personal stories and provides the reader with a deeper understanding of the dying process and the options available to individuals living out their last few days, weeks or months.

Case histories help the reader understand just what is involved in navigating the healthcare industry to ensure your wishes are followed.

Got this for a friend before they passed away. Then, it was donated to Hope Hospice for others to read and enjoy.

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