

Measuring Impacts of Community Screenings of “Being Mortal” in California

December 16, 2015

Following are insights from pre- and post-surveys of Californians who attended community screenings of the film “Being Mortal,” which were sponsored by the California HealthCare Foundation and the John and Wauna Harman Foundation. “Being Mortal” is a FRONTLINE documentary that aired on public television stations nationwide in February 2015. The program, which follows Dr. Atul Gawande, a surgeon, writer, and public health researcher, shares the close-up experiences of several patients and families at the end of life, including his own journey with his father’s death. The community screenings were meant as a way to allow conversations to continue about the difficult topic of end-of-life care. In all, 65 community screenings were held by 39 communities in California with more than 3,000 participants.

While there was some variation of format at each screening, usually the events started with a screening of “Being Mortal” and then a discussion afterwards of the issues raised in the film. At 25 of the screenings, participants filled out short questionnaires before the film and then again after viewing and discussing it. The goal was to measure impressions and the impact of the film and discussions on participants. In all, 1,564 individuals completed the surveys while at the screenings.

To gain insight into longer term impacts of the film and discussions, we re-contacted individuals who had attended the screenings one to three months later

to see what actions, if any, they had taken as a result of their participation in the screenings. We were able to reach 24% of the original participants (i.e., 381 individuals) through an online survey.

The surveys were conducted from July 17 through October 29, 2015¹.

How to Interpret the Results

The surveys are not representative of California's adult population. Individuals self-selected to attend the screenings (i.e., they were not randomly recruited) and as a result, the screening audience population as a whole was older, more white, more female, and more college-educated than the California population in general. Also, the 25 screenings were conducted in English, which means non-English proficient populations were excluded from the surveys.

For these reasons, these results should be viewed as qualitative insights into how individuals may react when seeing the film "Being Mortal" and talking with other community members about end-of-life issues. The surveys are meant to show the potential impact of "Being Mortal" as a conversation starter on a topic that is hard to talk about it. While we use percentages in this report when presenting the survey results, keep in mind they only reflect the percentage of people who attended the 25 community screenings and completed a survey (i.e., they do not reflect the California adult population overall).

¹ The 25 in-person events were held across the state from July 17 through September 19, 2015 in the following cities: Berkeley, Cupertino, Eureka, Fair Oaks, Fremont, Fresno, Irvine, Loma Linda, Monterey, Oakland, Pasadena, San Diego, San Francisco, Santa Rosa, Santa Barbara, and Venice. The online surveys were administered to all n=1,072 participants who provided an email address. The online survey was fielded from October 19 through October 29, 2015.

Summary

The pre- and post-surveys show that participants in the community screenings are engaged in this topic and find the film and discussions to be helpful. They feel that participating in the screenings helped them to think through their own end-of-life wishes, and by the end of the events, many seem motivated to talk to their loved ones about the issue.

However, the surveys show there was little shift in opinion during the community screenings themselves. This is because most participants came into the events already feeling that this topic is important. For example, even before seeing "Being Mortal," 96% of participants indicate that it is important to put their end-of-life wishes in writing. The pre- and post-surveys administered at the screenings, therefore, show little immediate impact. The effects of participating in the screenings were revealed in the results of an email survey that was sent weeks after the screening.

Specifically, the online follow-up survey completed among 381 respondents a month or longer after the screenings suggests that participants were, in fact, greatly impacted by the film and discussions. Since participating in the community screenings:

- 91% say they are now more comfortable discussing their end-of-life wishes;
- 91% say they have spent time thinking about the kind of care they want if they become ill;
- 81% have talked to someone about the kind of care they would want if they were dying;
- 60% of those who do not have an advance directive say they are now likely to put their end-of-life wishes into an advanced directive in the next three months; and
- 55% of those who have not yet talked with a doctor about this issue say

they are likely to bring up their end-of-life wishes at their next routine doctor visit.

On a number of other measures, the online survey shows that participants took meaningful actions to plan for their end of life after returning home. For example, 28% say they selected someone to make end-of-life decisions for them if they become ill and cannot speak for themselves. Also, 17% completed an advance directive after seeing the film and participating in the discussions. Finally, 6% spoke to their doctor about their end-of-life wishes. These are important steps to take in end-of-life planning, and the community screenings may have played an important role in these actions.

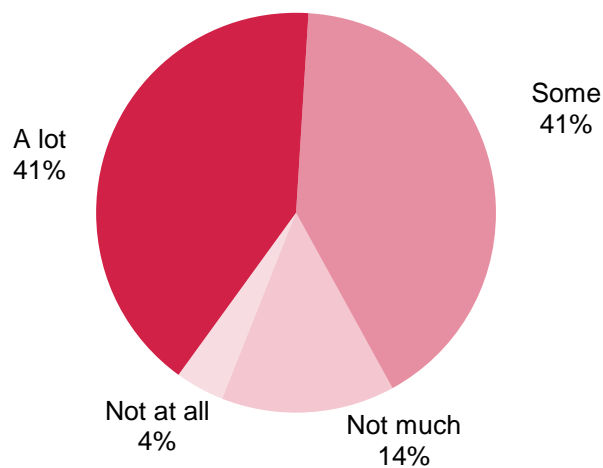
These results suggest there is potential to using "Being Mortal" as a means of spurring discussion – and possibly action – around end-of-life issues. The greatest impact may just be in increasing comfort with the topic and helping individuals explore their feelings about their own end of life more deeply.

SURVEY INSIGHTS

Most have thought about their end-of-life care before.

Before watching "Being Mortal," 82% of participants say they have thought a lot (41%) or some (41%) about what kind of care they would want if they became seriously ill or were dying. Only 15% say they have not thought about it much or at all. [Figure 1] White participants were more likely to say they have thought about it a lot/some (87%), compared to African American (66%), Latino (66%), and Asian American participants (67%). Older and more educated individuals are also more likely to say they have thought about end of life previously.

Figure 1: How much have you thought about the kind of care you might want if you became seriously ill or were dying?
N=1,564



“Being Mortal” resonates with participants and they believe others should see it, too.

After seeing the film and participating in a discussion, 89% say the experience was helpful in understanding issues around dying and end of life. More than half (53%) say it is very helpful; only 2% did not find it helpful. [Table 1]

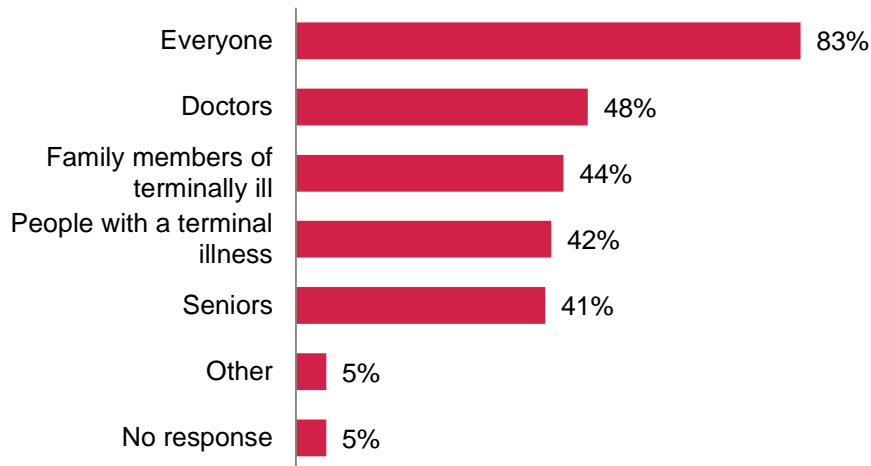
Table 1: How helpful was watching and discussing “Being Mortal” in helping you better understand issues around dying and end-of-life care?

N=1,564	Percent
10 – Very helpful	53
9	11
8	14
7	7
6	4
5	4
4	1
3	1
2	0
1	0
0 – Not at all helpful	0
10-6	89
5	4
0-4	2

More than eight in ten (83%) also say that everyone should see “Being Mortal,” while 48% think that doctors should view the film. Many also want people with terminal illnesses to see the film (42%) as well as family members of the terminally ill (44%) and seniors (41%). [Figure 2] Across all ages, races, and education levels, respondents think everyone should see the film; women are

more likely than men to say that everyone should see "Being Mortal" (85% vs. 75%).

Figure 2: Who do you think should see "Being Mortal"?
N=1,584



In response to a similar question, the vast majority of participants indicate that the people close to them should see "Being Mortal." Specifically, 89% think their friends, family, and others in their community should watch "Being Mortal"; 62% believe they should "definitely" see it. [Table 2] A larger share of women than men believe their friends, family, and others in the community should *definitely* watch "Being Mortal" (67% vs. 48%).

In addition, 52% feel that *viewing* and *discussing* the film were equally helpful – and 73% would attend another event in the future that focuses on end-of-life issues.

Table 2: Thinking about your friends, family, and others in your community, do you think “Being Mortal” is something they should watch?

N=1,564	Percent
10 – Definitely yes	62
9	8
8	10
7	6
6	3
5	3
4	0
3	0
2	0
1	0
0 – Definitely no	0
10-6	89
5	3
0-4	0

The community screenings caused participants to feel “inspired” and “encouraged” but also “sad.”

Participants experienced a range of emotions during the community screenings. When asked to give one word that describes how they felt after watching and discussing the film, a few words stood out: inspired, encouraged, informed, moved, thoughtful, reflective, grateful, sad.

Putting wishes in writing is important.

Before the film, almost all participants say it is important to have their end-of-life wishes in writing (96% important; 72% very important). After watching the film and discussing it, they continue to think these are important things to do (96% important; 75% very important). There was no meaningful shift in opinion. [Table 3]

Table 3: How important is it to have you end-of-life wishes in writing?

N=1,564	% Pre	% Post	Difference
10 – Very important	72	75	+3
9	9	10	+1
8	9	7	-2
7	4	3	-1
6	2	1	-1
5	1	1	0
4	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
0 – Not at all important	0	0	0
10-6	96	96	0
5	1	1	0
0-4	0	0	0

It is important to talk to doctors about end-of-life care wishes.

Before viewing the film, 87% of participants say it is important to talk to their doctor about end-of-life wishes. These numbers stay high after watching the film and having the discussions. [Table 4] Large majorities across gender, age, race, and education groups believe it is important to have these conversations.

Table 4: How important is it to talk with your doctor about your end-of-life care wishes?

N=1,564	% Pre	% Post	Difference
10 – Very important	55	57	+2
9	8	10	+2
8	13	12	-1
7	7	6	-1
6	4	3	-1
5	6	4	-2
4	1	1	0
3	2	1	-1
2	1	0	-1
1	0	0	0
0 – Not at all important	1	1	0
10-6	87	88	+1
5	6	4	-2
0-4	5	3	-2

Participants also agree that everyone should make decisions about their end-of-life wishes and discuss their decisions with doctors and their loved ones (93% agree; 66% strongly agree). There is a slight shift in intensity after seeing the film and discussing it: after the screening, 71% strongly agree with this statement.

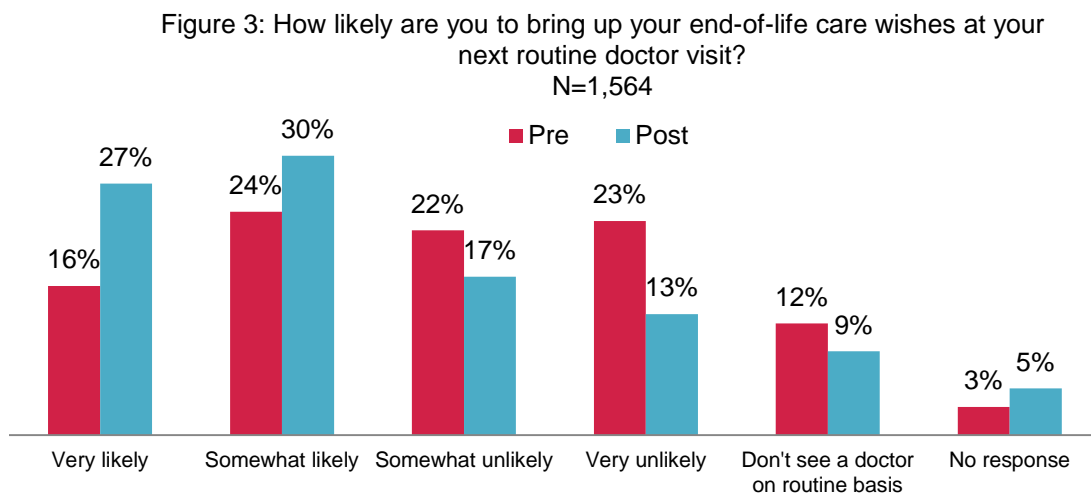
[Table 5]

Table 5: Everyone should make decisions about their end-of-life wishes and discuss them with their doctors and loved ones.

N=1,564	% Pre	% Post	Difference
10 – Strongly agree	66	71	+5
9	9	11	+3
8	11	8	-3
7	5	4	-1
6	2	1	-1
5 – No opinion	3	2	-1
4	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
0 – Strongly disagree	0	0	0
10-6	93	95	+2
5	3	2	-1
0-4	0	0	0

The film and discussions prompt more to say they will talk to their doctors about their end-of-life wishes.

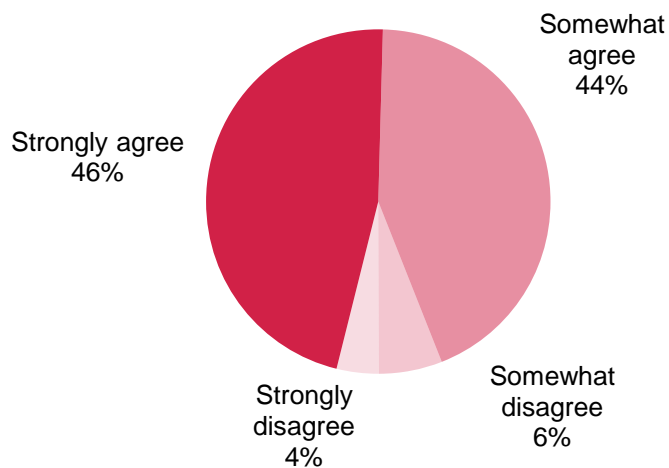
Before watching the film, 40% of participants say they are likely to bring up their end-of-life wishes at their next routine doctor visit. After the film and discussion, this percentage increases significantly: 57% say they are likely to bring up their wishes with their doctor (27% very likely). [Figure 3] Following the viewing and discussions, older participants (65 years or older) are most likely to say they are likely to bring up their end-of-life wishes with their doctors (65% likely, 34% very likely).



A month or longer after the community screenings, participants say the film and discussion had an impact.

Most participants who were reached a month or longer after the community screenings (i.e., 381 individuals) say the event affected them in a number of ways. Specifically, nine in ten (90%) say the film and discussion made them feel more willing to discuss end-of-life care issues than before; only 10% feel it has not made them more willing to discuss these issues. [Figure 4]

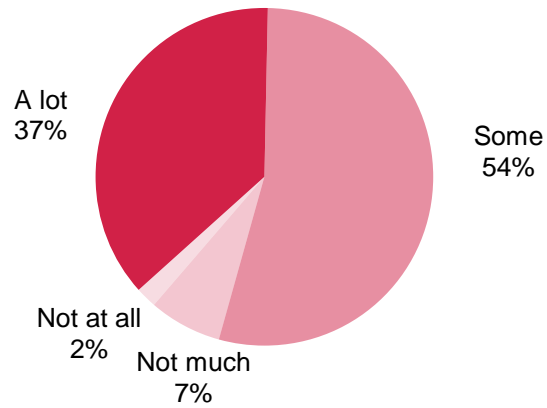
Figure 4: Do you agree or disagree: Watching “Being Mortal” has helped me feel more willing to discuss end-of-life care issues than I was before seeing the film.
N=381



The same share (91%) say they have spent a lot or some time thinking about the kind of care they would want if they became seriously ill a month or longer after the screenings; only 9% say they have not thought about it much or not at all.

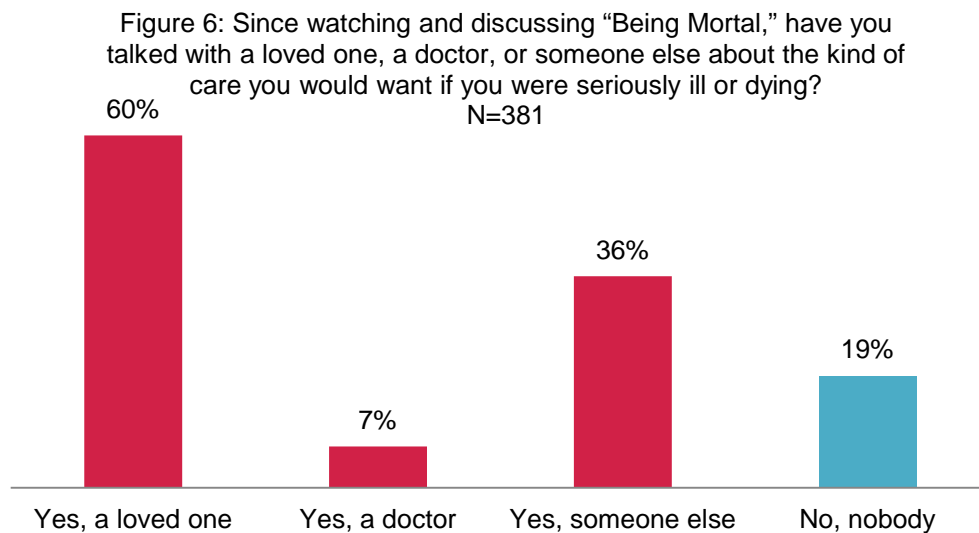
[Figure 5]

Figure 5: Since watching “Being Mortal,” how much have you thought about the kind of care you might want if you became seriously ill or were dying?
N=381



Most have talked with someone about their wishes since the community screenings.

Most participants (81%) who were reached a month or longer after the screenings say they spoke with someone about the kind of care they would want if they were dying. Most spoke to a loved one (60%), 7% spoke to a doctor, while 36% discussed the issues with someone else. Nineteen percent did not speak with anyone. [Figure 6] For those who did not discuss the screenings, many say they have had these conversations previously or have just have not had the time.



After the community screenings, many told friends and family about “Being Mortal,” talked to them about their end-of-life wishes, encouraged them to put their own wishes in writing, and took other actions.

The film and discussions spurred a number of activities according to those who participated in the online follow-up survey. For example, 73% say they told friends or family about the film or watched it with them after the community screening. Four in ten (42%) spoke with a loved one about the kind of care they would want if they were seriously ill or dying, and 54% say they encouraged them to put their end-of-life wishes into writing. More than one-quarter (28%) says they picked a person to make their health care decisions for them if they are no longer able to speak, and 17% completed an advance directive since the community screenings. [Table 6]

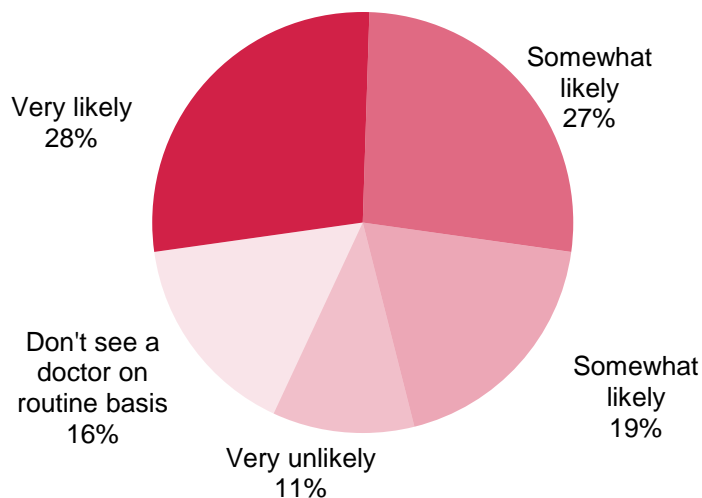
Table 6: Since watching and discussing “Being Mortal,” have you done any of the following actions?

N=381	% Yes	% No	% Did before
Told my friends or family about this film or watched it with them.	73	20	11
Thought through my feelings about dying and the kind of care I might want.	62	8	43
Encouraged family members or friends to put their wishes in writing.	54	26	28
Talked with a loved one about the kind of care <u>they</u> would want if they were seriously ill or dying.	42	34	35
Picked the person I want to make health care decision for me if I’m unable to speak for myself.	28	19	61
Put my end-of-life wishes in writing in an Advance Directive.	17	33	53
Talked with my doctor about his/her approach to caring for dying patients.	6	82	14

Most say they are likely to talk to their doctors about their end-of-life wishes after participating in the screenings.

Of those participants who have not previously discussed their doctor's approach to dying patients, 55% say they are likely to bring up their end-of-life wishes at their next routine visit since seeing the film and participating in the discussions. [Figure 7]

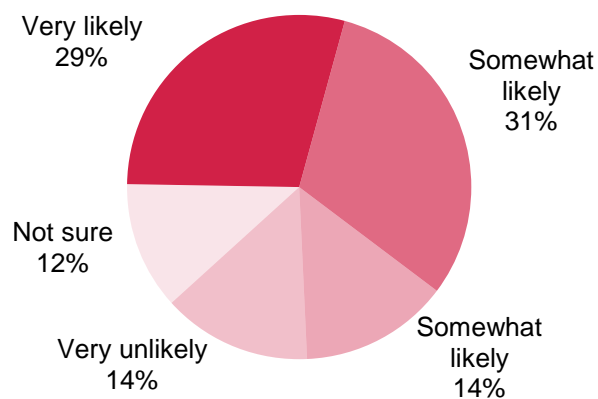
Figure 7: How likely are you to bring up your end-of-life care wishes at your next routine doctor visit?
N=313



Most say they are also likely to complete an advance directive since the screenings.

Of those without an advanced directive, 60% say they are likely to put their end-of-life wishes into an advanced directive in the next three months; 40% are unlikely or unsure. [Figure 8]

Figure 8: How likely are you put your end-of-life wishes in writing in an Advance Directive in the next three months?
N=127



Among individuals who say they are unlikely to complete an advance directive in the near future, the survey responses suggest the main barrier is feeling they do not need an advance directive at this point in their life. Some also say they do not know how or do not have the time to set up an advanced directive right now.

CONCLUSIONS

The surveys conducted at the community screenings of "Being Mortal" and particularly the online survey conducted after these events suggest that watching the film and then discussing it with others can have an important impact on participants. While it is impossible to draw a direct correlation between participating in the community screenings and the actions that individuals took after the event, the survey results suggest they are related. Specifically, individuals who participated in the screenings say months after the event that they are now more comfortable with the topic and have thought through their own wishes for end-of-life care. Eight in ten have had a conversation with someone in their life about their end-of-life wishes after the screenings. One-quarter chose someone to advocate for their end-of-life issues if they are unable to speak for themselves and 17% completed an advance directive. These are important steps in end-of-life planning and the survey suggests that the film and discussion may have helped to pave the way for these actions to occur.

While these are not quantitative results and only reflect the views of a self-selected group of individuals who attended the screenings, the implications are positive. "Being Mortal" could be a useful conversation-starter for individuals who are ready to think about and discuss end-of-life care issues.

APPENDIX

Demographics from Initial Events n=1,564			
		White	70%
Male	23%	African American	6%
Female	76%	Latino	8%
		Asian American	12%
18-29	8%	Other	1%
30-39	6%		
40-49	7%	High School or less	3%
50-64	30%	Some college	22%
65+	47%	Undergraduate	32%
		Post-graduate	42%

Demographics from Online Survey n=381			
		White	81%
Male	15%	African American	3%
Female	85%	Latino	4%
		Asian American	11%
18-29	5%	Other	1%
30-39	3%		
40-49	9%	High School or less	1%
50-64	35%	Some college	19%
65+	47%	Undergraduate	34%
		Post-graduate	46%