



HEALTHCARE: The death and dying show: a hard sell to mainstream media, but Moyers paves the way

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In attempts to encourage Americans to tune into a PBS series entitled On Our Own Terms: Moyers on Dying, the New York City shop of Kelly & Salerno Communications - Moyers' agency of record - is deep into what it says has been a two-year effort to urge the media to cover end-of-life issues.

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In the four-part series airing September 10 through 13, journalist Bill Moyers and his wife, Judith, look at death and dying in America.

Kelly & Salerno is handling promotion and advertising, in addition to publicity. Two of the agencies working on Last Acts - Barksdale, Ballard & Co. and Stewart Communications - are also doing events and community outreach for the TV series.

Says partner Karen Salerno: 'When we first went to the consumer magazines to get them to want to write about this, they would all say, 'This is really important, and we wanted to write about it, but we ultimately decided not to do it because it was too taboo. How do you sell magazines with death?''

Calling the pitch 'an enormous challenge,' Salerno says journalists were ultimately attracted to the fact that Bill and Judith Moyers were involved in the series. The attention to the issue created by Jack Kevorkian and the Oregon assisted-suicide law also contributed.

Salerno predicts that the series will, for the first time, get major consumer magazines - from women's publications to newsweeklies - to give attention to end-of-life issues.

For example, Good Housekeeping plans to run a human interest feature that will follow a family coping with end-of-life issues along with practical sidebars containing useful information.

'Money magazine is doing a big feature on the financial issues involved in end-of-life care, which includes a profile on Bill and Judith Moyers,' adds Colby Kelly, Salerno's partner. 'There are some additional

pieces in high-profile weeklies and major broadcast pieces that are being confirmed as well.'

No book connected to the series is planned, but Barnes & Noble will do a promotion in conjunction with the series. 'There are many books that deal with end-of-life care - from the practical to the spiritual,' Kelly says. A selection will be displayed prominently in the 900 Barnes & Noble and B. Dalton bookstores across the country. BarnesandNoble.com will feature a link to series information and to books on end-of-life issues.