

You are the producer of a network television program whose main characters are emergency room physicians. Recently a member of your staff has brought to your attention a current article in the New England Journal of Medicine which compares the depiction of cardio pulmonary aspiration (CPR) on TV shows with reality. According to a study conducted by the article's authors, based on watching about one hundred TV programs, on television two thirds of CPR patients survive. In reality, the survival rate is 7 to 15%, when a patient's heart stops beating in a hospital. Far fewer survive when patients enter an emergency room in cardiac arrest. The authors of the article point out that CPR on television almost always fails to convey how gruesome and ugly it can be. It can break bones in a person's chest. Even if the heart is restarted, if it has stopped for too long the patient may suffer permanent brain damage. For these reasons, the authors of the article note, most physicians try to persuade a terminally ill patient to forego CPR if her heart stops beating in the hospital. The article's authors express concern that the portrayal of CPR on TV may make it more difficult for doctors to do this in some cases.

A script under consideration for a show on your series, to be aired next year, involves a dramatic scene in which CPR saves the life of an accident victim. Should you use the script? If so, why? If not, why not?

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