

# ***The search for a final sense of meaning in end of life discourses***



# Sokrates (496 – 399 BC)



# Dylan Thomas (1914 – 1953)



# **Attitudes towards Death and Dying**

## **Influence of language and culture**

**Antonovsky: Sense of coherence**

**Comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness**

**Frankl: Logotherapy**

**Those who have a ,why‘ to live, can bear with almost any ,how‘**

**Walden: SEiQOL**

**Schedule for the Evaluation of the individual Quality of life**

**Fegg: SMiLE**

**Schedule for Meaning in Life Evaluation**

**Selman: Spiritual well-being**

**,Are you at peace with yourself‘**



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University Hospital Bonn  
Malteser Hospital Bonn/Rhein-Sieg

“He won the right to die without dignity.”

# Cultural Differences

## Influence of language



# **Terminology**

## **UK: End-of-life care**

**Liverpool Care Pathway for the Dying:  
Last days of life (48-72 hours)**

**→ Transfer of the hospice model to non-specialist setting**

**End of Life Care Strategy:  
Prognosis is measured in months or possibly a year or two**

**→ Palliative care is for cancer patients**



# **Cultural Differences**

## **Influence of language**

### **Symptom assessment**

**What is fatigue, drowsiness, tiredness?**

**Who is in more severe pain?**

**The case of transdermal opioids in Germany**  
**Consolation = „Trostpflaster“**

**Taubert M: ‚Je ne veux pas crèver‘ EJPC 2007, 14:78-9**





# **Attitudes towards Death and Dying**

## **Influence of language and culture**

**Taubert M: ‚Je ne veux pas crèver‘ EJPC 2007, 14:78-9**

**French: crever**

**German: verrecken, verenden**

**Italian: crepare**

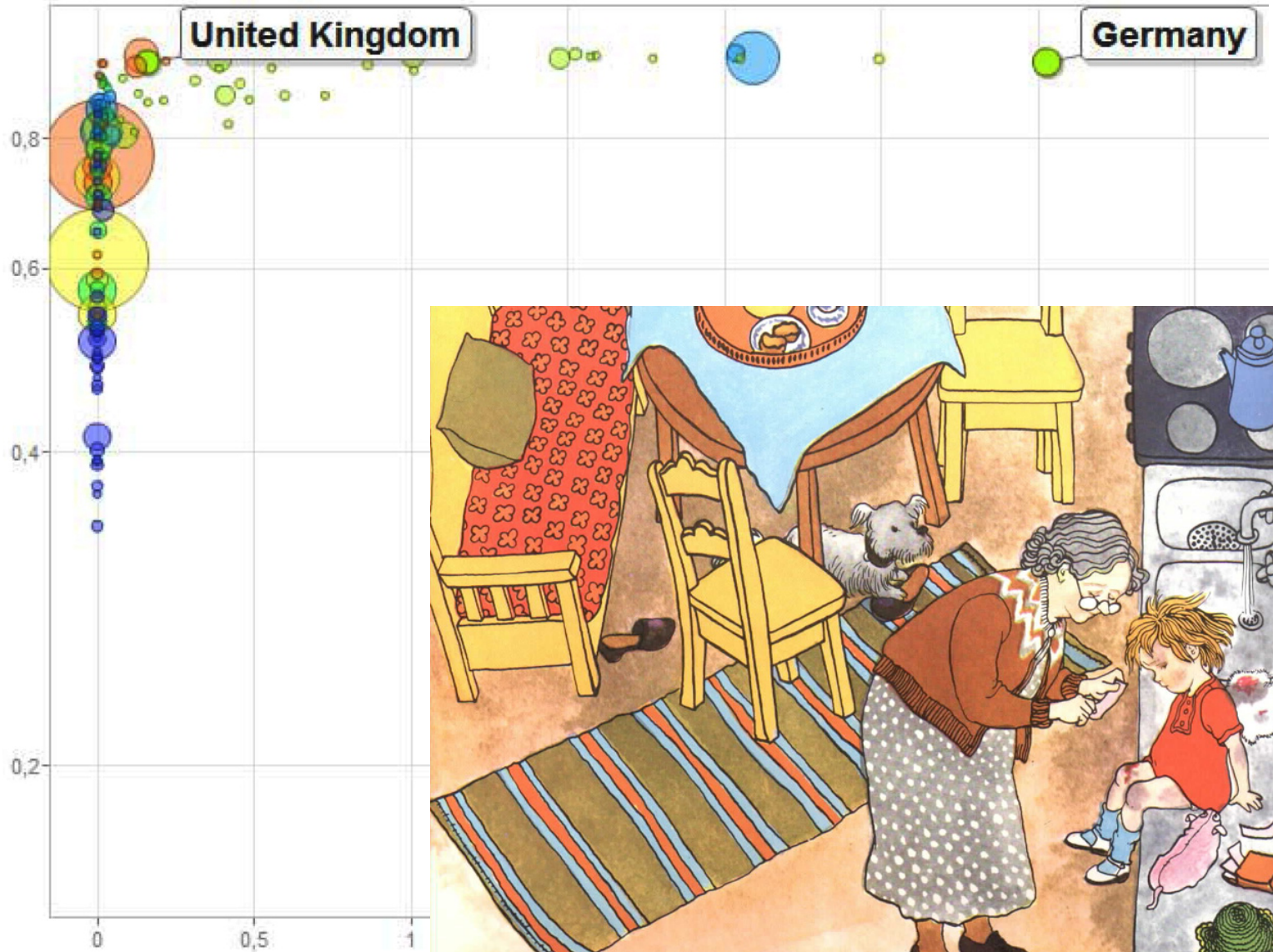
**English: die, perish, peg out, kick the bucket**

**Stiff upper lip?**

**Mediterranean syndrome?**



# The Case of Transdermal Opioids Germany



# Painfulness for Cabuntogueños (Philippines)

## Kohnen N. On Painfulness 2003



Rank	Disease
1	Tuberculosis
2	Kidney stone
3	Stroke
4	Leprosy
5	Bone fracture
...	
33	Blindness
...	
38	Slowly going blind
...	
41	Eye infection
44	Deafness
45	Ear infection

# Painfulness for Medical Staff (Germany)

Rank	First year	Third year	Physicians
1	Myocardial infarction	Myocardial infarction	Myocardial infarction
2	Stroke	Burn wound	Kidney stone
3	Bone fracture	Kidney stone	Burn wound
4	Burn wound	Toothache	Toothache
5	<b>Going blind</b>	Bone fracture	Bone fracture
6	Rheuma	Ear infection	Rheuma
7	Addiction	Dog bite	Headache
8	Toothache	Rheuma	Ear infection
9	<b>Blindness</b>	Headache	Stomachache
10	Kidney stone	Tuberculosis	<b>Eye infection</b>
11	Dog bite	Stroke	Neckache
12	Deafness	Stomachache	Dog bite
13	Tuberculosis	Addiction	Cut wound
14	Ear infection	Cut wound	Addiction
15	Headache	<b>Eye infection</b>	<b>Going blind</b>
16	<b>Eye infection</b>	<b>Going blind</b>	<b>Blindness</b>
17	Stomachache	Neckache	Tuberculosis
18	Imbecility	<b>Blindness</b>	Deafness
19	Struma	Imbecility	Flu
20	Cut wound	Deafness	Stroke
21	Flu	Flu	Diarrhea
22	Neckache	Struma	Imbecility



# Unbearable Suffering

## Ruijs et al. BMC Palliative Care 8 (2009)

Development of SOS-V (State of Suffering), 69 items

5 Domains:

medical signs and symptoms	37 items
loss of function	7 items
personal aspects	17 items
aspects of environment	6 items
nature and prognosis of the disease	2 items

Good content validity, feasible in practice



# Cultural Differences Belgium

Bruxelles area, 552 French & 149 Dutch speaking physicians

	French-speaking	Dutch-speaking
Euthanasia	0.7	2.7
Palliative sedation	15.8	9.3
Palliative sedation with life shortening intended	2.4	0.7





"I said you had three months to live, and I meant it."

# **Request for Euthanasia Germany**

**Patients are involved in an active process of constructing the course of disease.**

**They try to balance life time and anticipated agony  
→ perception of time is distressing.**

**Dying process is anticipated as terrible and scary  
→ conflict with available schemes of a rapid and painless dying.**

**Anticipated pictures (agony and dying process) are highly available  
→ patients experience them as intrusive.**

**Coping strategies are focused on avoidance.**





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