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He died “peacefully” at home

I like collecting euphemisms. I found a new one when my father, a retired general practitioner, died “peacefully” at home. That is what the announcements say in the newspapers, and that is what my relatives are telling everyone.

It was a perfectly routine death, in which my 93 year old father had cancer of the prostate. The cancer had been well controlled for many years, and his health had started to deteriorate only in the few months before his death. Four days before his death, he was still able to go out to a celebration lunch. He then had a potentially drawn out course perhaps over many weeks.

We experienced a relatively short three days and nights of distressed breathing and bubbling in his lungs. Most of the time he was unable to communicate other than by raising his right hand and grasping any proffered hand. The final day was followed by seizures and increasing cyanosis, as he finally succumbed to respiratory failure. My mother wailed and implored him not to leave her. Leaving aside my mother’s distress, surely there must be a better way of dying “peacefully”? Euphemisms always hide the painful truth, and this was one.

David Veale