Never Say Die:  
5 Simple Ways to Save a Life

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About the Speakers

Rajeev Venkayya, MD, director of Global Health Vaccine Delivery, oversees late-stage development of health technologies and interventions as well as efforts to expand access to health solutions in the developing world. Previously, Venkayya served as special assistant to the U.S. president and senior director for biodefense at the White House. One of his key responsibilities was development and implementation of the U.S. strategy for pandemic influenza. He served as an advisor to the director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and was one of 13 nonpartisan White House Fellows appointed by President Bush in 2002. Venkayya is a pulmonary and critical care physician and assistant professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco. Previously, he directed the high-risk asthma clinic and co-directed the Medical Intensive Care Unit at San Francisco General Hospital. He holds a medical degree from Northeastern Ohio Universities College of Medicine.

Neal Baer, MD, is Executive Producer of the NBC television series Law & Order: Special Victims Unit. During his tenure, among the awards the series has won include the Shine Award, the Prism Award, and the Media Access Award, and actors on the show have won three Emmys and the Golden Globe. The series regularly appears among the top ten television dramas in national ratings. Prior to his work on SVU, Baer was Executive Producer of the NBC series ER. A member of the show’s original staff and a writer and producer on the series for seven seasons, he was nominated for five Emmys as a producer. He also received Emmy nominations for Outstanding Writing in A Drama Series for the episodes “Hell and High Water” and “Whose Appy Now?” For the latter, he also received a Writers’ Guild of America nomination. Baer graduated from Harvard Medical School and completed his internship in Pediatrics at Children’s Hospital, Los Angeles. He received the Jerry L. Pettis Memorial Scholarship from the American Medical Association as the most outstanding medical student who has contributed to promoting a better understanding of medicine in the media. Baer has worked in South Africa and Mozambique since 2006, teaching photography to mothers with HIV and to AIDS orphans so that they can tell the world their own stories. Baer graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in Political Science from Colorado College. He holds master’s degrees from Harvard Graduate School of Education and from Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in Sociology. Before working in television, he spent a year at the American Film Institute as a directing fellow. Baer serves on the boards of many organizations related to health care, including the Venice Family Clinic, RAND Health, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Children Now, and the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS). He is also co-chair of Hollywood, Health & Society.
**Paul D. Blumenthal, MD, MPH** is Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Stanford University School of Medicine. He directs the Section of Family Planning Services and Research at Stanford and also directs SPIRES, the Stanford Program for International Reproductive Education and Services, an initiative providing technical assistance and training to family planning programs in 16 countries across Africa, Asia, and Central America. Dr. Blumenthal received his medical degree from The University of Health Sciences/The Chicago Medical School in 1977 completed a residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center in Chicago, followed by a Fellowship in Family Planning at UCLA in 1982. For over 20 years, Dr. Blumenthal has been an advisor to multiple international agencies such as JHPIEGO Corporation, IPAS, Family Health International, Gynuity Health Projects, and the World Health Organization and has served as the special Advisor to Minister of Health and Family Planning of the Republic of Madagascar. He currently serves as the Global Medical Director for Population Services International, and has served as Medical Director for both Planned Parenthood of Chicago and Maryland in the past. Dr. Blumenthal is author of over 100 peer-reviewed publications and is currently involved in studies of community-based distribution of injectable contraceptives, Post Partum IUD insertion, and “single visit” approaches to the prevention of cervical cancer. He is committed to the development and implementation of innovative approaches to reproductive health issues in both the domestic and international arenas.

**Stephen Ostroff, MD,** is the director of the Bureau of Epidemiology of the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PADOH), and also serves as the Acting Physician General for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Before these appointments, he had a 21-year career with the U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS), most of that time at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta. He retired from CDC in 2005, and before joining the PADOH worked in Honolulu with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as the DHHS representative to the Pacific Islands, and as a consultant to the World Bank on public health projects in the South Asia region. While at CDC, Dr. Ostroff was Assistant Surgeon General, USPHS, and Deputy Director of the National Center for Infectious Diseases (NCID), and was responsible for coordination of outbreak investigations performed by NCID scientists and was engaged in issues related to emerging infectious diseases. Born in Philadelphia PA, Dr. Ostroff graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine in 1981 and completed residencies in internal medicine at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center (1984) and preventive medicine at the CDC (1988). He began his career with the USPHS as a National Health Service Corps assignee to Pohnpei, Micronesia, followed by completion of training in CDC’s Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) in Seattle WA. He worked in the Enteric Diseases Branch, the Division of Viral & Rickettsial Diseases, and the Respiratory Diseases Branch in NCID before becoming NCID’s Associate Director for Epidemiologic Science from 1993-2002. Between 2002-2004, he was also Acting Director of CDC’s Select Agent Program. He has served as special advisor to the President of the International Society for Travel Medicine (2001-2005), and President of the Department of Defense’s Armed Forces Epidemiology Board (2001-2005). He currently is President of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, chairs the Public Health Committee of the American Society for Microbiology’s Public and Scientific Affairs Board, is a member of the Policy Committee for the Society of Healthcare Epidemiologists of America, is a member of CDC’s Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee, and is the Secretary’s representative to the Pennsylvania State Medical Board. He also chairs the Pennsylvania Department of Health Institutional Review Board.
**Lawrence Kaplow** is currently consulting producer on *House*. As a result he has enjoyed several Emmy Award nominations and a WGA Award for Best Episodic Script. He attended University of Rochester for English and NYU’s Graduate Program in Creative Writing, Fiction. He got his first script from Paul Haggis, a long story that begins with Marjorie David begging Stephen Nathan and David Shore to hire him as a researcher at Family Law, because, as he said, “I can Google.” Despite that interview or perhaps because of it he has worked with Shore since. He has spoken at NYU and USC. Kaplow recently sold a drama pilot to CBS with Elaine Goldsmith Thomas. He’s an avid snow skier, a terrible surfer, an abomination, really, and likes cows.

**Sandra de Castro Buffington, MPH**, is director of Hollywood, Health & Society, a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center that leverages the power of the entertainment industry to improve the health and well being of individuals and communities worldwide. De Castro Buffington provides resources to leading scriptwriters and producers with the goal of improving the accuracy of health-related storylines on top television programs. Funded by the CDC, California Endowment, and The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the program recognizes the profound impact that entertainment media have on individual knowledge and behavior. De Castro Buffington is known for her award-winning work in global health and social transformation. She has nearly 30 years of experience working in global health, entertainment education and emergence technologies; 20 years were spent working internationally, and five of those years were spent in residence overseas. Formerly Vice President of the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA), she guided the flagship WomenLead program to equip, mobilize and empower women globally and nurtured a network of 5,000 alumni in 140 countries. With USAID, she led the development of a $250 million strategic framework for global health leadership and management and managed a $108 million portfolio of strategic communication programs worldwide. She coordinated the first international Entertainment for Social Change conference at the USC Annenberg School to leverage the power of the entertainment industry and expertise of reproductive health experts for social transformation worldwide. With the Johns Hopkins University Center for Communication Programs, de Castro Buffington launched an award-winning vasectomy promotion campaign in Brazil, earning seven international advertising awards including a Bronze Lion at the Cannes Film Festival and Gold Medal at the London International Advertising Awards. She has received numerous honors and awards including the USAID Maximizing Access and Quality Outstanding Achievement Award for her global health and social change programs, and Brazil’s Award for Leadership in developing the Bahia State Reproductive Health program. She is a Board member of Primary Purpose Productions, a former associate faculty member at The Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health, and a past Board member of the Pan American Health and Education Foundation.