

# Most Americans believe God can save life—even if diagnosis differs: Divine intervention in end-of-life cases

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A majority of Americans believe that divine intervention can trump doctors' advice in end-of-life cases, according to a new report published in *Archives of Surgery*.

The study, conducted by researchers at the University of Connecticut, found that 57 percent of adults believe in the possibility of a miracle even after doctors have told them a family member's life can't be saved. But just 20 percent of trauma professionals felt divine intervention could save a patient.

"Regarding medical futility, the results indicate that physicians can be reasonably sure they are trusted to make those decisions. However, they need to be prepared to deal with families who are waiting for a miracle," the report concluded.

The study was conducted in the summer and fall of 2005, just a few months after the public debate over whether to remove the feeding tube of Terri Schiavo, a Florida woman whom doctors concluded was in a persistent vegetative state.

Although 61 percent of respondents said that "a person in a persistent vegetative state could be saved by a miracle," only 11 percent said that they would prefer to be kept alive if given the choice.

Researchers surveyed 774 trauma care specialists and 1,006 other adults. Race, age, gender and education level were weighted to reflect census data. -*Religion News Service*