

José Morales, family doctor, 65 years old: "I left medicine after a near-death experience because my values changed, and I became more interested in spirituality."

Source: lavanguardia.com

Link: <https://www.lavanguardia.com/vivo/longevity/20250513/10673665/jose-morales-medico-familia-65-anos-deje-medicina-despues-experiencia-cercana-muerte-porque-cambiaron-mis-valores-me-intereso-mas-espiritualidad.html>

Date of the original article: 2025-05-14

Published on web-ur.com: 2026-02-24

Date of last update: 2026-02-24

Author/Publisher: Dr. José Morales / LA VANGUARDIA, Marta Conde

Translated by: JD Arimathea

LA VANGUARDIA

LONGEVITY

La Vanguardia interview with

José Morales

Family doctor



This doctor had a near-death experience (NDE), although he waited to talk about it due to concerns about how it might be received by colleagues and patients.

After leaving medicine, he explains it in detail in the book 'What Death Taught Me'

Marta Conde, journalist for La Vanguardia.

May 14, 2025, 11:51 a.m.

March 5, 2022, is a day José Morales will always remember. This 65-year-old family doctor had spent his entire career practicing in Arbeca, a town in Lleida, and a few months earlier he had managed to transfer to the Ebro Delta (Tarragona), his little "paradise," where he hoped to finish his professional career. He suffered from cardiac arrhythmia, which had given him a few scares, and was awaiting surgery, but he was very happy in his new phase of life and with his new colleagues.

That day, when he got up from his nap to get dressed, he lost consciousness. He collapsed and hit his back and forehead. "When I regained consciousness a few minutes later, I couldn't believe what I had

experienced. Dazed, I crawled as best I could to the bed and, lying there, spent some time trying to understand what had happened."

He talks about light, sensations, memories of past moments in the form of images... What is described as a Near-Death Experience (NDE). He took a long time to talk about it because of the discomfort it might cause among colleagues and patients, but in doing so he discovered many more stories like his and also thought about how this could help people who are terminally ill or grieving. Now, this doctor, who has a master's degree in Emergency Medicine and Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy, explains it in detail in his book *Lo que la muerte me enseñó* (*What Death Taught Me*, Roca Editorial).

What is your first memory of this near-death experience?

I saw myself outside my body. And what happened, although I tell it as a coherent story, is difficult to convey in words. It is an experience of tremendous length. I saw my own corpse and thought, wow, I've died. For me, as a family doctor who is used to certifying deaths, it was obvious that I was looking at the corpse of what had been my body until that moment. But without fear or anxiety. You just let yourself go. People often talk about a light at the end of a tunnel, and it was something like that. You are drawn to a bright place, which in my case reminded me of an alpine environment.

“It was as if I were standing in front of my lying body, and I was sucked into an emerald, green whirlpool.”

You talk about a tremendous length of time. Do you know how long this situation lasted?

If you ask me how long the experience lasted, I will say an hour and a half. But I know that's not true. According to science, I couldn't have been in cardiac arrest for more than 40 seconds. I may have been unconscious for a little longer. But if it had been longer, I would have had aftereffects.

And what happened during that time?

It was as if I was standing in front of my lying body. And I saw myself being sucked into an emerald, green whirlpool. I went to a dark space first, where only my arms were illuminated, and I heard a low, rhythmic sound in the background. Then a soft, warm breeze carried me toward a large, intense light. And I felt liberated in an environment that reminded me of the Alps. The feeling was one of immense peace. Two friends from different moments in my life appeared to me, and then a being of light that conveyed a feeling of acceptance and empathy.

It was then that he visualized a panel full of images from his life with moments he did not like very much. What was in them?

I saw situations in which, due to my egocentricity, I had caused pain or sadness to other people. It was like seeing my life in one fell swoop, as if I were standing before an immense altarpiece. And for me, it was tremendously disturbing. Becoming aware of everything, of the pain or disappointment I had caused at times... it was very overwhelming. And that being of light sent me waves of compassion and acceptance. I lack the words to describe that moment.

And how was the return?

Seeing precisely these most unpleasant moments of my life filled me with a sense of guilt and a desire for reparation. And I thought, "I need to go back and make things better." I felt myself falling backwards and found myself back in my body with severe back pain.

“I didn't say anything to anyone for six months, I didn't call an ambulance or explain it to my wife.”

But not everyone can come back.

I came back because I was able to come back. If I had been hit by a car, it wouldn't have been possible, no matter how much I wanted it, because I wouldn't have had the material support to do so. What moves me is to think that my life depended on a spark that happened in this stopped heart in those first seconds of cardiac arrest. A spark that is capable of igniting and reactivating the heartbeat. And that feeling of being able to say, "OK, let's go." But of course, in most cases, you can't.

Why didn't you tell your wife?

I didn't tell anyone. I didn't call an ambulance, I didn't explain it to my doctor or my wife. I didn't tell anyone for six months. I know it's an incomprehensible attitude for someone with my background. What I did do was write down what I had experienced the next day so that I wouldn't forget what had happened. I told my friends about it at dinner, and from then on I began to hear about more cases.

What do your colleagues say about this experience?

Since I made my case public, there have been doctors who have told me about their own NDEs or those of loved ones, as well as other patients. There have been doctors who have expressed skepticism, although they do not discredit the story. What must be understood is that this is not something to be imposed on anyone. It is a process in which we will continue to advance with research, and in reality, no one has the final word today. In the book, I do not intend to open a debate on this subject, but rather it is a self-help text for people who find themselves in situations such as fear of death, a terminal situation, or in a process of mourning.

And why did you leave medicine?

Because my values changed. I was doing very well in medicine, I had a very comfortable life. But on a personal level, I changed. As a result of my NDE, I became more interested in the search for spirituality and caring for others through charitable activities. On a personal level, I devote myself more to accompanying people in their grief.

“I left medicine because my values changed; I became more interested in the search for spirituality.”

You also have a master's degree in Cognitive Behavioral Psychotherapy. What is the state of research on near-death experiences?

Today, there is a lot of science at the neurophysiological level. Researchers such as Sam Parnia, an intensive care physician at NYU Langone Health and associate professor at New York University Grossman School of

Medicine, are working on a study that measures the brain's electrical activity when the heart and breathing stop. It should also be noted that resuscitation techniques date back to the mid-1960s. Before that, nothing was done. According to data from the Spanish Heart Foundation, the current survival rate is around 5%, but it could increase to 15% if CPR is performed, and up to 20% if there is also a defibrillator program in the area. All of this increases the possibility of cases that can experience events of this magnitude.

Have you discovered any patterns among people who have had an NDE? Is there a profile of people who are more susceptible to having this type of experience?

We do know that the accounts of the experience are very similar, but there is no difference between gender or age. I would say that the NDE is the most democratic thing there is, because it affects people of all ages and conditions. It happens to children and the elderly, to young people and others in their prime. And there are no differences in cultural level or relevance either—in the book, you mention the NDE cases of celebrities such as Sharon Stone, Elizabeth Taylor, Peter Sellers, Jane Seymour, and former Colombian President Ernesto Samper. What they all have in common is that it affects their lives. There was a butcher, for example, who had to give up her profession because she felt empathy for the animals she was slaughtering, and she also developed a desire to help, which she did not have before the experience. She studied and became a social worker.

“The NDE is the most democratic thing there is, because it affects people of all ages and conditions.”

Is religion also present in NDEs?

It is true that religious figures are adapted to the cultural context. When I talk about a being of light, a Muslim is likely to see Muhammad, a Christian Jesus or the Virgin Mary, and a Jew Moses. Atheists or non-religious people may talk about light or energy. The experience adapts to the language of the person experiencing it.

And now you will give a talk on this subject to health professionals.

Yes, I will give a six-hour seminar on Near-Death Experiences and their importance and interest for the healthcare world. When a person is dead, it is actually a process that begins in agony and ends with the person passing away. We call this process transition. And I, after my experience, have personal certainty. It is not dogma; I have been in contact with an afterlife that we call transcendence.