

# House md

## Season 2 episode 1

### Acceptance

This episode look at issues of life and death, trust and fear.

#### Synopsis

Clarence is an inmate on death row. He hears one of his companions on death row being asked what he wants for his last meal, whether he wants a spiritual advisor and whether he wants to make a last statement. Clarence comments on the offer of a spiritual advisor: 'you're going to hell anyway'. When Clarence is taken for exercise, he is haunted by visions of the four people he murdered: his girlfriend, two inmates and a prison guard. Then he collapses . Dr House asks for his case.

Dr Cameron does House's shift in the clinic and comes across Cindy, a young woman with a cough who is having a medical check up for a new job. Unfortunately Cindy's chest X ray shows she has cancer, which is confirmed by Dr Wilson, but Dr Cameron does not want to accept it. She asks Dr House to think of alternatives to the cancer diagnosis but he insists she has to tell Cindy she has cancer. He writes the 'five stages of dying' on the board: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance.

Dr Cameron, Dr Chase and Dr Foreman have a discussion about the death penalty. Dr Chase says he's against it on principle, not just because he was once in a seminary. Dr Foreman isn't so sure.

Dr Foreman treats Clarence but is dismissive of him and his behaviour. Clarence tries to see similarities between them as they are both black and come from similar backgrounds, but Dr Foreman thinks Clarence just didn't try and is responsible for where he is now. Dr House has an argument with Dr Foreman about whether people who have committed crimes should be less deserving of medical treatment. Dr House then discovers that Clarence tried to kill himself by drinking copier fluid and cures him by feeding Clarence (and himself) alcohol which destroys the poison and gives House a hangover.

House still isn't happy with Clarence's condition and is convinced there is still an underlying cause to his medical problems, but then he starts to think that the underlying problem may also have something to do with his homicidal behaviour. He discovers that Clarence has a tumour which is flooding his system with adrenalin. This could explain Clarence's strength, but House and Foreman also discuss whether people should still be able to control their emotions and stop themselves from hurting people which Clarence did not.

Cameron bargains with Dr House for a test to look for other causes of Cindy's X ray. He points to the board and suggests that she is going through the stages of dying herself. He gives her the test in exchange for more time in the clinic. The tests are negative and a biopsy reveals a definitive result of terminal cancer. When Dr Wilson hears of this he visits Cindy to discover Cameron sitting with her

laughing and joking. He tells her that she has to do her job and that making friends with Cindy will only bring her pain. Putting in emotional investment is absolutely not worth it. Cameron counters that Cindy is alone, and when a good person dies someone should care and someone should be upset about it.

Dr House and Dr Foreman have a conversation about Clarence. Dr Foreman has entirely changed his mind now he knows about the tumour and wants to testify at Clarence's appeal. House accuses Foreman of being a hypocrite. Dr Foreman asks House if he thinks the death penalty is right, but House does not answer. He tells Dr Foreman that he must testify in his own time, but doesn't stop him.

Finally Dr Cameron tells Cindy that she is going to die and puts her arms around her as Cindy tries to take it in.

House's final action is to rub the five stages of dying off the board, pausing to consider the word Acceptance before erasing it.

Another thread which runs throughout the whole show is 'do what you think is right' as a guiding principle. House dupes Stacy the hospital lawyer (and House's former partner) to get the prisoner transferred to the hospital, but then Stacy rats him out to Dr Cuddy later. They discuss how they can work together and how they can trust one another. So there are matters of trust and conscience as threads to hold on to in making decisions, which contrasts with Clarence's actions of jealousy, revenge, and retribution.

The central issue of 'Acceptance' has multiple meanings. Foreman does not want to accept Clarence because he thinks he should have been able to drag himself out of his background the way he did, but later, knowing more things about Clarence's health, he accepts him and wants to help him. Cameron does not want to accept that Cindy has cancer, but in the end has to face her responsibility as a doctor to tell her the truth and accept her own emotional reaction to the untimely death of a good person. She also has to accept her feelings have changed towards House, just as House has to accept that Stacy is married and beyond his reach. There is also the matter of how the hospital can 'accept' a dangerous prisoner.

Excerpts to watch:

Dr Wilson tells Dr Cameron to tell Cindy she is dying

Dr Cameron finally tells Cindy the truth

Clarence's visions in the exercise yard of those he killed

Dr Foreman argues with Clarence about his childhood

Dr Foreman explains to Dr House why he changed his mind about Clarence

Some questions:

Why do you think Dr Wilson told Dr Cameron it wasn't worth it to get so upset about Cindy?

What do you think Dr Foreman learns about judging people during this episode?

What does the episode tell us about killing people and saving people?

What do you think about House's jibe to Foreman about treating people according to how 'good' they are?

How does 'do what you think is right' relate to faith and conscience?

What do you think might make House and Stacy trust each other, despite their actions?

What is the significance of the theme of 'acceptance'?

Some bible passages:

Matthew 7.1-5

John 8.1-11

John 13.34-35

2 Samuel 18.33