Media messages and images shape patients’ perceptions about quality of life (QOL) through various “old” media—literature, film, television, and music—and so-called “new” media—the Internet, e-mail, blogs, and cell phones. In this article, the author provides a brief overview of QOL from the academic perspectives of nursing, psychology, behavioral medicine, multicultural studies, and consumer marketing. Selected theories about mass communication are discussed, as well as new technologies and their impact on QOL in our society. Examples of media messages about QOL and the QOL experience reported by patients with cancer include an excerpt from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation radio interview with author Carol Shields, the 60 Minutes television interview focusing on Elizabeth Edwards (wife of presidential candidate John Edwards), and an excerpt from the 1994 film The Shawshank Redemption. Nurses are challenged to think about how they and their patients develop their perceptions about QOL through the media.

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