

## Publication

## Understanding death in custody : a case for a comprehensive definition

**JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)****ID** 2701498**Author(s)** Ruiz, Géraldine; Wangmo, Tenzin; Mutzenberg, Patrick; Sinclair, Jessica; Elger, Bernice Simone**Author(s) at UniBasel** [Wangmo, Tenzin](#) ; [Elger, Bernice Simone](#) ;**Year** 2014**Title** Understanding death in custody : a case for a comprehensive definition**Journal** Journal of bioethical inquiry**Volume** 11**Number** 3**Pages / Article-Number** 387-98**Keywords** Death in custody, Prisoners, Public health, Human rights

Prisoners sometimes die in prison, either due to natural illness, violence, suicide, or a result of imprisonment. The purpose of this study is to understand deaths in custody using qualitative methodology and to argue for a comprehensive definition of death in custody that acknowledges deaths related to the prison environment. Interviews were conducted with 33 experts, who primarily work as lawyers or forensic doctors with national and/or international organisations. Responses were coded and analysed qualitatively. Defining deaths in custody according to the place of death was deemed problematic. Experts favoured a dynamic approach emphasising the *link* between the detention environment and occurrence of death rather than the *actual* place of death. Causes of deaths and different patterns of deaths were discussed, indicating that many of these deaths are preventable. Lack of an internationally recognised standard definition of death in custody is a major concern. Key aspects such as place, time, and causes of death as well as relation to the prison environment should be debated and incorporated into the definition. Systematic identification of violence within prison institutions is critical and efforts are needed to prevent unnecessary deaths in prison and to protect vulnerable prisoners.

**Publisher** Springer**ISSN/ISBN** 1176-7529**URL** <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11673-014-9545-0>**edoc-URL** <http://edoc.unibas.ch/dok/A6298884>**Full Text on edoc** No;**Digital Object Identifier DOI** 10.1007/s11673-014-9545-0**PubMed ID** <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24965436>**ISI-Number** WOS:000340884400015**Document type (ISI)** Journal Article