

## Research Project

### Decision making in times of scarce resources: A mixed-method study

#### **Third-party funded project**

**Project title** Decision making in times of scarce resources: A mixed-method study

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**Organisation / Research unit**

Ethik / Bio- und Medizinethik (Elger)

**Department**

Ethik

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**Probable end** 31.12.2023

**Status** Active

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed our world and caused huge loss of lives and resources. As of August 22, 2021, over 212 million persons have been infected in 223 countries and there have been more than 4.4 million deaths. Among those most affected are older persons, and research has repeatedly shown that older age and comorbidity are major risk factors for severe complications and mortality. Healthcare structures worldwide faced dire situations of resource scarcity in light of the unprecedented pace at which the illness spread. Triage guidelines were issued to help healthcare workers decide on the best use of scarce resources (e.g. ICU beds, ventilators). However, much less attention was given to drafting guidance on prehospital management under scarcity. There is evidence in Switzerland as well as worldwide that prehospital approaches used some forms of triage either spontaneously or in a more or less planned way, creating ethically questionable disparities.

This project fills an important existing research gap: given the disproportionate burden of mortality and morbidity carried by the elderly population, it is important to learn (1) about their experiences and perspectives concerning seeking and receiving healthcare in times of scarce resources, and (2) the perspectives of professionals who took care of these vulnerable patients and had to make relevant decisions.

**Survey methodology – Objective A.** We will gather solid data from the perspectives of patients (65 years) seeking care in Geriatrics hospitals/departments in Basel, Lausanne, Zurich and Geneva. The survey will mostly include closed-ended questions evaluating their satisfaction with medical care received during their current in-patient stay; whether they feared seeking treatment and for what reasons (e.g. fear of reduced quality of care); whether they made advance directives; and include a series of short case examples to understand their perspectives related to resource allocation (including prehospital triage).

**Qualitative Interviews – Objective B.** Study participants for this part of the project will include the variety of involved professionals as we intend to capture broad experiences to fully understand how the organization of care for older persons took place during the pandemic in the four cantons where the organization of nursing homes varies. A maximum variation sample of 15 participants from each canton will be recruited, totaling 60 participants for the project. During the interviews, we will, for example, explore the challenges that they faced (or not) in caring for older patients/residents during the different pandemic waves, what has been learned since then to prepare for upcoming waves, decisions that were taken to address situations of resource scarcity including prehospital triage and prehospital care decisions, advance care planning, how guidelines related to these decisions were made and communicated.

Medical-ethical analysis – Objective C. We will carry out an in-depth medical-ethical analysis based on existing national and international prehospital triage guidelines. The results from this review will be confronted with our findings from A. and B. relevant to pre-hospital ethical decisions, followed by in-depth multidisciplinary discussions with concerned stakeholders. Our medical-ethical analysis will help issue ethical recommendations to be discussed as well with members of the SAMW Central ethics committee (ZEK) for needed next steps in Switzerland.

### Financed by

Foundations and Associations

**Add publication**

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**Specify cooperation partners**

ID	Kreditinhaber	Kooperationspartner	Institution	Laufzeit - von	Laufzeit - bis
4662744	Wangmo, Tenzin; Elger, Bernice Simone	Bingisser, Roland, Prof.	University of Basel	01.06.2022	31.12.2024
4662745	Wangmo, Tenzin; Elger, Bernice Simone	Jox, Ralf	Chuv, University of Lausanne	01.06.2022	31.01.2024
1546141	Elger, Bernice Simone	Kressig, Reto, Prof. Dr., Chefarzt und Extraordinarius für Geriatrie	Universitätsspital Basel	01.09.2011	30.09.2014
4662746	Wangmo, Tenzin; Elger, Bernice Simone	Zerky, Dina, Prof	University of Geneva	01.06.2022	31.12.2024
4662747	Wangmo, Tenzin; Elger, Bernice Simone	Bula, Christoph	CHUV, University of Lausanne	01.06.2022	31.12.2024
4662748	Wangmo, Tenzin; Elger, Bernice Simone	Bischoff, Heike, Prof.	University of Zurich	01.06.2022	31.12.2024
4662749	Wangmo, Tenzin; Elger, Bernice Simone	Pautex, Sophie, Prof.	University of Geneva	01.06.2022	31.12.2024
4662750	Wangmo, Tenzin; Elger, Bernice Simone	Sommer, Johanna, Prof.	University of Geneva	01.06.2022	31.12.2024
4662751	Wangmo, Tenzin	Caplan, Arthur	New York University	01.06.2022	