

Bioethics Digest

In this feature, our team provides you with an overview of the most recent publications in the field of bioethics, with a particular focus on contributions coming from (or having relevance for) Switzerland.

Buona lettura! Bonne lecture ! Viel Spass beim Lesen! Enjoy the reading!

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AI ETHICS



“AI support for ethical decision-making around resuscitation: proceed with care”

In this article, the authors reflect on the potential use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems for healthcare professionals to better assign to a certain patient the right resuscitation status. To do so, these writers first expose the current challenges related to making an ethical decision pertaining to resuscitation status in general. Second, they present possible contributions of AI in this field. Finally, the article illustrates a pilot interview-based study that was conducted on this topic with Swiss healthcare professionals. Based on this study, the authors reflect on three sets of preconditions to be fulfilled before deploying AI systems in resuscitation decision-makings. That is conceptual, methodological and procedural preconditions. It is highlighted that a great challenge, when developing such AI system, would be to have good training data (“ground truth”). These data are not easy to obtain since “current practices of reaching and documenting CPR decisions are fraught with challenges such as insufficient knowledge regarding patient preferences, time pressure and personal bias”.

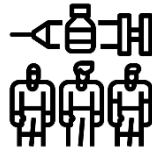
Biller-Andorno N, Ferrario A, Joebges S, et al. AI support for ethical decision-making around resuscitation: proceed with care. *Journal of Medical Ethics*. Published Online First: 09 March 2021. doi: [10.1136/medethics-2020-106786](https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2020-106786)

“Towards a pragmatist dealing with algorithmic bias in medical machine learning”

There is a crucial connection between medical ethics and epistemology. Based on this premise, the authors argue for a pragmatist conception of truth in epistemology to better tackle issues of algorithmic biases in relation to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in medicine. They first describe the problem of bias in medical applications of AI. To mitigate biases created by AI, they recommend to avoid “clinging to a supposedly objective truth of the training data [used to create the algorithm]”, but rather focus on “the outcome-based clinical utility of any medical [AI] program”. To substantiate their claim, the authors refer to Chang’s interpretation of William James’ instrumental view of truth. They then also rely on two potential concrete examples (the use of algorithms for schizophrenia and Systemic lupus erythematosus) and finally tackle some potential criticisms to their argument.

Starke G, De Clercq E, Elger BS. Towards a pragmatist dealing with algorithmic bias in medical machine learning. *Med Health Care Philos.* 2021 Mar 13. doi: [10.1007/s11019-021-10008-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11019-021-10008-5). Online ahead of print.

PUBLIC HEALTH ETHICS



“A matter of priority: equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines.”

The approval of COVID-19 vaccines together with their limited availability globally has sharpened the ethical dilemma of fair distribution. In this article, the authors explain two prominent “ethical” views on how governments should tackle vaccine distribution in relation to other countries. On the one hand, governments could follow some form of vaccine nationalism, i.e. the view that “countries have community-embedded responsibilities to prioritise their own population”. Therefore, a government should seek to obtain as many vaccines as possible for its own people (e.g. through Advance Purchase Commitments with pharmaceutical companies) without aiming at fair distribution between countries. On the other hand, vaccine cosmopolitanism put forward that “justice demands that vaccine allocation should be independent of the recipients’ national identities [...], which implies we ought to find other (fair) allocation criteria, irrespective of borders”.

The authors are aware that distribution of vaccines will continue even if a solution between these two opposing views has not yet been found. Nevertheless, they recommend a global discussion on the topic to uphold the legitimacy of vaccination policies either ways (nationalism or cosmopolitanism).

Holzer F, Luna F, Roa Manríquez T, Biller-Andorno N. A matter of priority: equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. *Swiss Med Wkly.* 2021;151:w20488. doi:[10.4414/sm.w.2021.20488](https://doi.org/10.4414/sm.w.2021.20488)