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**An interdisciplinary and bilingual newsletter  
about advances in health ethics theory and  
practice**

**PRAGMATIC  
HEALTH ETHICS  
RESEARCH UNIT**

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 **IRCM** INSTITUT DE RECHERCHES  
CLINIQUES DE MONTRÉAL

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## Profil du mois

### Maartje Schermer, M.D., Ph.D.

**Maartje Schermer** holds a chair in Philosophy of Medicine and is the head of the [Department of Medical Ethics, Philosophy and History of Medicine](#) at Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, The Netherlands. She has a background in Medicine (MD) and Philosophy (MA, PhD). She chairs the Committee of Ethics and Law of the Dutch Health Council and the Centre for Ethics and Health. She has led numerous multidisciplinary research projects, published over 75 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, co-edited two international volumes, and four Dutch edited volumes on medical ethics and philosophy of medicine.



Maartje's research has focused on patient autonomy and decision-making, human enhancement, and neuroethics. She employs both philosophical and empirical methods and aims to contribute to real-world healthcare practice. Her current research projects address the ethics of e-health and AI, personalized and preventive medicine, and the conceptualization of health and disease. She is open to opportunities for international

collaboration on these topics.

## **A pragmatist approach to the conceptualization of health and disease**

The way in which we conceptualize 'disease' and 'health' has far-reaching practical consequences. For patients a diagnosis may bring both benefits – treatment, recognition – as well as burdens, such as stigmatization. How we as societies measure and try to reduce health inequalities, or how we determine who qualifies for medical treatments or sickness benefits all depends on the definitions used. While the traditional medical-philosophical debate between normativists and naturalists has reached deadlock, the actual landscape of health and disease is rapidly changing due to medical, technological and societal developments. In our research project Health and disease as practical concepts, we aim to develop a new, pragmatist approach to the conceptualization of health and disease. Our ambition is to contribute to solving 'problematic situations' that arise in practice, for example concerning our understanding of 'health risks' and 'pre-diseases' in relation to overdiagnosis and overtreatment. We take a pluralist stance and argue that the adequacy of definitions of health and disease depends on the context and purpose for which they are employed. In doing so, it is important to pay close attention to the entanglement of descriptive and normative components. Normative consideration may be hidden in seemingly neutral definitions, while these definitions in turn may have morally relevant consequences, notably regarding access to care.

Our team of philosophers, ethicists and historians hopes to contribute to a better understanding of these key concepts and to help improve healthcare practice. We are open to collaboration, so if you are interested, drop us a note!

### **Selected publications**

Verweij M, van de Vathorst S, **Schermer** M, Willems D, de Vries M. [Ethical advice for an intensive care triage protocol in the COVID-19 pandemic: lessons learned from The Netherlands](#). *Public Health Ethics*. 2020 Jul;13(2):157-65.

**Schermer** MH, Richard E. [On the reconceptualization of Alzheimer's disease](#). *Bioethics*. 2019 Jan;33(1):138-45.

**Schermer** M. [Reprogenetic technologies between private choice and public good](#). In: Parens E and Johnston J, eds. *Human flourishing in an age of gene editing*. Oxford University Press 2019, pp 212-227.

### **Websites**

[Professional website](#)

[Department of Medical Ethics, Philosophy and History of Medicine at Erasmus MC](#)

### **Events and announcements**

## The Montreal Health Ethics Conference Series

The Montreal Health Ethics Conference Series is a monthly bilingual livestreamed conference aiming to bring clinicians, academics, patients, politicians, public figures, students and community members together to think about and discuss issues in health ethics.

### **2021 theme: Wellness, health and human flourishing**

More than ever, the question of well-being is at the heart of our lives and our concerns, but what role do we really give it in our personal and professional lives and more broadly in our society? Is this ideal accessible to all? How does our health care system respond to different visions of health and wellness? This series of lectures will highlight the perspectives of leading international experts reflecting on ethical issues related to wellness. The series will also focus on a number of critical interventions that will lead us to reflect on an inclusive vision of wellness and health. [Click here](#) for the conference series calendar.

Plus que jamais la question de bien-être est au cœur de nos vies et de nos préoccupations professionnelles et plus le garant dans notre société. Cette série de conférences mettra en lumière les perspectives d'experts internationaux de premier plan qui réfléchiront sur les questions éthiques liées au bien-être, la santé humaine épanouissement. La série sera aussi axée sur un nombre d'interventions critiques qui nous amèneront à réfléchir à une vision inclusive du bien-être et de la santé.

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FEBRUER - FEBRUARY	MAI - MAY	30
24 Philippe Chénier, PhD Psychologue et conférencier	6 Marie Schenberg, PhD Philosophie et éthique de la santé, Centre de recherche en éthique de la santé, Université de Québec	30 Marie Schenberg, PhD Philosophie et éthique de la santé, Centre de recherche en éthique de la santé, Université de Québec
MARS - MARCH	27	OCTOBRE - OCTOBER
4 Gina Farrow, PhD Senior Professor of Jurisprudence, University of Western Ontario, Canada, Université de Western Ontario	27 Gina Farrow, PhD Senior Professor of Jurisprudence, The Hastings Center	14 Gregory Alginate, PhD Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto, Canada, Université de Toronto
25	16	NOVEMBRE - NOVEMBER
Marie Bernard, PhD Senior Professor of Health Services, University of Toronto, Canada, Université de Toronto	16 Marie-France Royceval, MD, PhD Médecine, Centre de recherche Lével, Université de Québec, Centre de recherche en éthique de la santé, Université de Québec	4 Marisa Baskinberger Sachs, PhD Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto, Canada, Université de Toronto
AVRIL - APRIL	9	DÉCEMBRE - DECEMBER
22 Gérard Plouffe Chercheur principal, Centre de recherche en éthique de la santé, Université de Québec	9 Gérard Plouffe Chercheur principal, Centre de recherche en éthique de la santé, Université de Québec	2 Panel de réflexion/Reflection panel

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### **Upcoming conferences in May:**

#### **Bien-être, santé mentale, autonomie**

Dr Alain Ehrenberg, Sociologue et directeur de recherche,  
Centre national de la recherche scientifique-CNRS (France)  
6 mai 2021 – 12h PM à 13h PM

**Pour vous inscrire:** [Cliquez ici](#).

#### **Binocularity: a conceptual tool for comprehending and respecting persons**

Dr. Erik Parens, Senior Research Scholar, The Hastings Center  
May 27th 2021 – 12 PM to 13 PM

**To register:** [Click here](#).

#### **[Call for abstracts and registration](#)**

##### **[• Congress of the Feminist Approaches to Bioethics](#)**

Reimagining Feminist Bioethics (July 18th – 19th, 2022)

##### **[• 16th World Congress of Bioethics](#)**

Bioethics post Covid-19: Responsibility and transparency in a globalized and interconnected world (July 20th-22nd, 2022)

Institute for Biomedical Ethics, University of Basel, Switzerland

**Abstract submission** (both events): [Click here](#). The deadline is July 30th, 2021.

**Registration** (both events): [Click here](#). The deadline is January 31st, 2022.

**For more information:** [Click here](#).

**[Call for abstracts: Interdisciplinary conference – The ethical, legal, and social aspects of cognitive enhancement strategies](#)**

**August 24th – 26th, 2021 (2pm-7pm CET), Cologne**

**Fritz Thyssen Foundation (Germany) & online**

**Organizers:**

- Dr. Sebastian Sattler (University of Cologne, Germany)
- Prof. Dr. Guido Mehlkop and Floris van Veen (University of Erfurt, Germany)

**Deadline for abstract submission:** May 12th, 2021.

**[Appel aux candidatures: Programme de bourses d'appui à la relève](#)**

**Observatoire international sur les impacts sociétaux de l'IA et du numérique (OBVIA)**

**Université Laval, Québec, Canada**

**Bourses offertes en 2021-2022:**

- Bourses de collège (1 500 \$ - 2 bourses disponibles pour 12 mois, non renouvelables);
- Bourses de baccalauréat (5 000 \$ - 2 bourses disponibles pour 12 mois, non renouvelables);
- Bourses de maîtrise (15 000 \$ - 2 bourses disponibles pour 12 mois, renouvelables 1x);
- Bourses de doctorat (21 000 \$ - 2 bourses disponibles pour 12 mois, renouvelables 2x).
- Financements de stages postdoctoraux (25 000 \$ - 3 financements disponibles pour 12 mois, non renouvelables).

**Pour plus de renseignements:** Communiquez avec Guillaume Macaux (guillaume.macaux@observatoire-IA.ulaval.ca).

**[Call for contributions: Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research \(2016\) – Proposed revisions for public consultation](#)**

**Panel on Responsible Conduct of Research, Government of Canada**

The set of proposed revisions to the responsible conduct of research framework is now available online.

**Deadline for submitting written comments on the proposed revisions:** June 23rd, 2021

**[Appel aux inscriptions: 2e Journée de la recherche](#)**

**Département de médecine de l'Université de Montréal**

**19 mai 2021, 13h à 17h, heure de l'Est - format virtuel, inscription gratuite**

**Date limite pour s'inscrire :** 18 mai 2021

**Lien pour s'inscrire :** [Cliquez ici](#).

**Pour plus d'informations:** Contactez Dr. Jean-François Cailhier (jf.cailhier@umontreal.ca), responsable de l'organisation de la journée.

**[Call for applications: The 16th Yale Bioethics summer program](#)**

**Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics, Yale University, Connecticut, USA**

**June 28th, 2021 to July 30th, 2021 – Virtual, with shortened schedule**

**Deadline:** Applications will continue to be accepted through late spring (until the class is full). You are encouraged to reach out at [bioethics@yale.edu](mailto:bioethics@yale.edu) to let them know if you plan

to apply, or if you have any questions on the program.

For more information on the Program's schedule: [Click here](#).

To apply: [Click here](#).

### [Call for abstracts and registration: The 24th IUHPE World conference on health promotion](#)

**Theme: Promoting policies for health, well-being and equity**

**Global scientific committee**

**May 15th to 19th**, in Montreal - Hybrid event

**Abstract submission:** [Click here](#).

**Deadline for abstract submission:** September 17th, 2021

**For any queries:** Please contact the Conference Secretariat – [iuhpe2022@jpd.com](mailto:iuhpe2022@jpd.com).

## Literature

### Interdisciplinary foundations of health ethics

#### [Digital health passes in the age of COVID-19: Are “vaccine passports” lawful and ethical?](#)

Gostin LO, Cohen IG, Shaw J. *JAMA*. 2021 Apr 7.

#### [The bioethics of loneliness.](#)

Lederman Z. *Bioethics*. 2021 Apr 7.

#### [The telemedical imperative.](#)

Parsons JA. *Bioethics*. 2021 Feb 15.

#### [Queue questions: ethics of COVID-19 vaccine prioritization.](#)

Giubilini A, Savulescu J, Wilkinson D. *Bioethics*. 2021 Feb 8.

#### [Religious accommodation in bioethics and the practice of medicine.](#)

Smith WR, Audi R. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*. 2021 Apr 2;46(2):188-218.

### Methodologies and practices in health ethics

#### [Confronting the hidden curriculum: a four-year integrated course in ethics and professionalism grounded in virtue ethics.](#)

Shelton W, Campo-Engelstein L. *Journal of Medical Humanities*. 2021 Apr 15:1-5.

#### [Layperson views about the design and evaluation of decision aids: a public deliberation.](#)

Schwartz PH, O'Doherty KC, Bentley C, Schmidt KK, Burgess MM. *Medical Decision Making*. 2021 Apr 5:0272989X21998980.

#### [An analysis of the long-term care policy mandates implemented in Canada during](#)

[the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

Just DT, Variath C. *Healthcare Quarterly* (Toronto, Ont.). 2021 Apr 1;24(1):22-7.

[Taking the burden off: a study of the quality of ethics consultation in the time of COVID-19.](#)

Kana L, Shuman A, De Vries R, Firn J. *Journal of Medical Ethics*. 2021 Apr 1.

[Developing a competency framework for health research ethics education and training.](#)

Tackett S, Sugarman J, Ng CJ, Kamarulzaman A, Ali J. *Journal of Medical Ethics*. 2021 Apr 1.

## Debates arising in news and social media

[Lab-grown embryos and human–monkey hybrids: Medical marvels or ethical missteps?](#)

Sarkar S. *The Conversation*. April 22, 2021.

[Back to the future — the therapeutic potential of psychedelic drugs](#)

Lieberman JA. *The New England Journal of Medicine*. April 15, 2021.

[Criminal defendants still cite a ‘gene for violence.’ It doesn’t exist.](#)

Farahany N & Robinson GE. *The Washington Post*. March 18, 2021.

[Brainwashed - An investigation into the CIA’s covert mind control experiments](#)

*CBC Podcasts*. January 28, 2021.

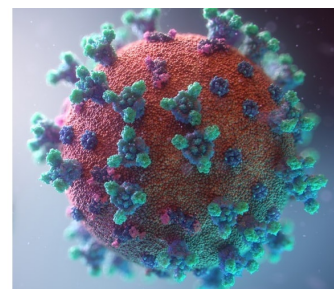
[Purdue researchers uncover blind spots at the intersection of AI and neuroscience.](#)

*Purdue University Research Foundation News*. December 15, 2020.

## Health ethics and the COVID-19 pandemic

### Recent and relevant literature

A list of the most recent and relevant health ethics scholarly publications relating to the COVID-19 response is available on [our website](#).



### Other resources

For more resources on pragmatic health ethics theory and practice, visit our website at <http://www.pragmatichealthethics.ca>.



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