Ethics and empiricism of health care rationing

Daniel Strech, MD, PhD

Cooperations:
- Georg Marckmann, MD, PhD, University of Tübingen
- For contributors in the scope of BMBF- research association „Allokation“ (Coordinator Georg Marckmann) see www.iegm.uni-tuebingen.de/allokation
- Marion Danis, MD, National Institutes of Health (NIH), Bethesda, USA
- Samia Hurst, MD, University of Geneva Medical School, Switzerland.

Background: Priority setting and health care rationing are increasingly discussed in Germany. Despite relatively intense debates on decision-making at the macro-level of the health system, there is a lack of critical discussion about how physicians at the micro-level of a doctor-patient-relationship should deal with the inevitable and already now prevalent rationing problem in an ethically and medically acceptable way. To develop practical applications for the micro-level, we need empirical information about the status quo of medical rationing on the one hand and a normative framework for fair decision-making processes on the other hand.

Research aims: Socio-empirical studies and systematic literature research were performed to determine the status quo and the internal structure of clinical-medical rationing nationwide and internationally. Based on these descriptive results and complementary to the present ethics literature, a normative framework was developed for ethics consultations on priority setting and rationing at the micro-level of the health care system.

Publications
- Strech D, Hurst S, Danis M [forthcoming in Medical Care] The role of ethics committees and ethics consultation in rationing decisions. A four-stage process.
- Strech D, Marckmann G [forthcoming in Dtsch Med Wochenschr (DMW)] [Is there health care rationing in German hospitals? How exactly do we know and why should it not be the most important question?] [German language]