

## **Ethics of ICU admission and treatment for the geriatric patients**

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According to the human rights declaration no discrimination can be made on the basis of age. It is therefore the fundamental right for each individual, independently of age, to be admitted if needed, to an Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

The individual always has the right to refuse admission to an ICU, or to ask to leave this ICU at any time he/she desires.

When admitted to the ICU, each individual has the right to receive the most appropriate care according to the actual knowledge of medicine, inclusive the knowledge of geriatric medicine. Every patient admitted to an ICU has the right to be treated by a geriatrician, together with the specialist in Intensive Care.

The environmental conditions of the stay at the ICU have to be adapted to the specific needs of older patients (e.g. sufficient sensory stimulation, adapted physiotherapy, adapted facilities for visiting, presence of family).

In agreement among the patient, family, family doctor (GP), nursing staff, geriatrician, the ICU specialist can propose to withhold or to withdraw ICU treatment if it is determined to be futile. Indeed patients with longstanding histories of illness, who are very dependant and in a terminal stage, frequently benefit more from palliative or comfort care than from ICU treatment.

The final goal is to improve the situation of the patient and not to create artificially a prolonged vegetative state.