

Case Study – Scarce Resources



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September 2021

Scarce Resource Bioethics Case Study

Mr. Jones is a 55-year-old, suffering from multiple medical issues including COVID-19. Mr. Jones is being treated in the ICU and is intubated. He had refused to get a vaccine for COVID-19, believing that he was healthy enough to “handle the flu.” This wasn’t the case, as Mr. Jones became severely ill and thus had to be intubated. The medical team is not optimistic about getting him off the ventilator any time soon, or ever.

The hospital is over-utilized, with every bed in the ICU and every vent in use. After seven days of Mr. Jones being on the ventilator, Mr. Andrews is also hospitalized. He is vaccinated but is experiencing a serious breakthrough case. It is likely that he will need ventilator support, but the expectation is that it wouldn’t be for very long.

If the medical team appeals to hospital policy, Mr. Andrews would have to wait until a ventilator is available or wait until another patient declines their on-going, aggressive ventilator support. If Mr. Andrews does not receive ventilator support soon, he will likely decline and pass away.

Mr. Jones had hinted to medical staff that he did not want to be a “vegetable” forever. The medical team is considering asking Mr. Jones or his family about their willingness to sacrifice his ventilator for Mr. Andrews.

The team is asking the medical ethics team for support and guidance.