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INVITATION to the Public defence of

Sarah C. MROZ

To obtain the academic degree of

'DOCTOR OF MEDICAL SCIENCES'- VUB 'DOCTOR OF HEALTH SCIENCES' - UGENT

Physicians' Personal End-of-life Preferences and Their Connection to Clinical Practice. An International Multi-method Study

The public defence will take place on

Friday, 14 March 2025 at 5 p.m.

In Auditorium Piet Brouwer

VUB Health Campus

Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Laarbeeklaan 103, 1090 Brussels

and can be followed online, accessible through the following link:

https://gf.vub.ac.be/redirects/PhD_defense_Sarah_Mroz.php

Summary of the dissertation

Physicians play a key role in end-of-life decisions, which are of increasing importance as the global aging population expands and people live longer with extended illnesses. In developed countries, half of all deaths are preceded by at least one end-of-life decision, including withholding and withdrawing treatment, palliative sedation or assisted dying, among others. There is evidence to suggest a connection between physicians' personal preferences and their own clinical practice. However, there is a lack of knowledge on physicians' end-of-life decision preferences and how those preferences impact their clinical decision-making. Exploring this link is crucial as physicians have significant influence on patients and health care systems. Gaining a better understanding will require exploring various factors including cultural, religious, sociocultural and jurisdictional influences.

The PROPEL study (Physician Reported Preferences for End-of-Life) seeks to gain an in-depth understanding of physicians' personal preferences on end-of-life decisions, how preferences impact their clinical practice and how various factors influence preferences. A multi methods approach is used including a quantitative survey in five countries: Belgium, Italy, Canada, USA (Georgia, Oregon & Wisconsin) and Australia (Queensland & Victoria); combined with a qualitative exploration using semi-structured interviews in Belgium, Italy and the USA (Wisconsin). As end-of-life options are expanding around the world, exploring these issues will allow for international comparison and knowledge sharing that will address complex moral and clinical issues related to end-of-life care.

Curriculum Vitae

Sarah Mroz holds a master's degree in Bioethics (2019, KU Leuven) and Public Health (2014, University of Wisconsin-Madison) and a bachelor's degree in Sociology (2007, University of Wisconsin-Madison). In November 2019 she joined the End-of-Life Care Research Group (Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Ghent University) as a doctoral researcher to study the end-of-life preferences of physicians and how their preferences are connected to clinical practice. Prior to working as a researcher at the End-of-Life Care Research Group she worked in cancer prevention for the Carbone Cancer Center at the University of Wisconsin.