

Supplementary material 1: Participant instructions

These instructions will step-by-step guide you through this study's process. Please carefully read each step completely before you start carrying out the activity. Please fully complete each step before proceeding to the next one.

This study is about decision-making in healthcare. We are interested in your views on this topic. There is currently a lot of debate on how to allocate scarce surgical capacity. Due to the corona-crisis, choices have had to be made about to whom to provide care and to whom not to provide care.

The statements on the twenty numbered cards describe ways in which we think the capacity of operation theatres could be prioritized. The first part of your task is to rank these statements. In the second part, you will be asked to elaborate on the choices you made.

1. Open the link to the VQ-method website. The twenty cards you will find contain statements about how surgical capacity *could be* prioritized in times of scarcity. This study is about peoples' individual opinions; there are no right or wrong answers. The numbers on the cards (from 1 to 20) are to help you to complete the exercise and have no other meaning.

2. Read through the twenty statements carefully. Press 'next'.

3. Place each statement into one of three piles:

1. A pile (to your right) for statements with which you agree;
2. A pile (on your left) for statements with which you disagree;
3. A pile (in the middle) for statements with which you neither agree nor disagree, do not consider relevant or are unclear to you.

Press 'save and continue'.

4. Take the pile containing the statements you agree with (on your right) and read through them once again. Select the statement which you agree with the most strongly and place it in the extreme right column of the score sheet, below the "+4". Next, select the two statements with which you next most strongly agree and place them in the two spaces below the "+3". It does not matter in which order you place them. Proceed until all statements you agree with have been placed on the score sheet.

4. Next, take the pile containing the statements you disagree with (to your left) and read through them once again. Select the statement with which you disagree the most and place it in the extreme left column of the score sheet, below the “-4”. Next, select the two statements which you now disagree with most strongly and place them in the two spaces below the “-3”. Again, it does not matter which of them you place at the top. Proceed until all statements you disagree with have been placed on the score sheet.

5. Finally, take the remaining ‘undecided’ pile and read through these statements once again. Place these cards in the remaining spaces on the score sheet in what you feel are the appropriate places. Press ‘save and continue’.

6. You will now see the statement you most strongly agreed with, and the one you most strongly disagreed with. In a maximum of two sentences, explain why you agree/disagree most with these statements. Press 'finish'.

The score sheet used by patients to rank the statements.

[illegible]

Supplementary material 2: Correlation matrix

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	100	50	0	20	63	29	50	-14	50	51	34	54	67	57	60	13
2	50	100	32	69	69	14	52	4	70	23	10	41	77	69	49	39
3	0	32	100	44	38	10	34	70	36	-8	34	-16	26	39	26	44
4	20	69	44	100	40	14	54	16	67	-8	-3	28	63	67	27	53
5	63	69	38	40	100	32	69	19	73	52	28	42	78	83	73	26
6	29	14	10	14	32	100	44	9	46	36	50	10	38	46	66	17
7	50	52	34	54	69	44	100	28	60	36	18	34	66	78	47	44
8	-14	4	70	16	19	9	28	100	17	-34	-16	-31	-4	33	18	41
9	50	70	36	67	73	46	60	17	100	21	23	39	74	86	70	57
10	51	23	-8	-8	52	36	36	-34	21	100	52	19	50	29	52	-21
11	34	10	34	-3	28	50	18	-16	23	52	100	17	31	13	48	-8
12	54	41	-16	28	42	10	34	-31	39	19	17	100	69	48	44	17
13	67	77	26	63	78	38	66	-4	74	50	31	69	100	82	71	40
14	57	69	39	67	83	46	78	33	86	29	13	48	82	100	78	53
15	60	49	26	27	73	66	47	18	70	52	48	44	71	78	100	16
16	13	39	44	53	26	17	44	41	57	-21	-8	17	40	53	16	100

This matrix represents the correlation of rankings among all 16 participants. The numbers 1 to 16 displayed horizontally (rows) and vertically (columns) correspond to unique participants.

Supplementary material 3: Factor arrays per perspective

The factor arrays shown below depict the position on the score sheet for each statement for each perspective.

Perspective 1 – clinical needs and outcomes

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
18. Patients who have contributed significantly in society should be prioritized	14. Patients who currently have an important societal function should be prioritized	15. Patients who depend heavily on others for care should be prioritized	16. Informal carers should be prioritized	7. Young patients should be prioritized (in comparison to older patients)	19. Doctors should be the ones to judge which patients get priority on the basis of their medical expertise.	6. Patients that are clinically deteriorating should be prioritized	10. Priority should be based on how many lives can be saved	3. Patients with the greatest need for treatment should be prioritized
	8. Patients with a healthy lifestyle should be prioritized	17. It is important when prioritizing that people can fulfill their role in society	2. Allocation of a surgery should be based on a first come, first served system	20. Patients should have a voice in who gets prioritized	12. Priority should be based on the best prognosis of the patient after treatment	11. Priority should be based on how many life-years can be saved	9. Priority should be given to those treatments that generate the most overall health for the most people.	
			1. Allocation of a surgery should be based on a lottery, everyone has an equal chance to get surgery	13. Patients who are healthcare professionals should be prioritized	5. Patients with the lowest quality of life should be prioritized			
				4. Patients with the worst health status should be prioritized				

Perspective 2 – population outcomes and contribution to society

-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
2. Allocation of a surgery should be based on a first come, first served system	18. Patients who have contributed significantly in society should be prioritized	5. Patients with the lowest quality of life should be prioritized	4. Patients with the worst health status should be prioritized	6. Patients that are clinically deteriorating should be prioritized	11. Priority should be based on how many life-years can be saved	10. Priority should be based on how many lives can be saved	12. Priority should be based on the best prognosis of the patient after treatment	9. Priority should be given to those treatments that generate the most overall health for the most people.
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			15. Patients who depend heavily on others for care should be prioritized	13. Patients who are healthcare professionals should be prioritized	7. Young patients should be prioritized (in comparison to older patients)			
				3. Patients with the greatest need for treatment should be prioritized				