



**ACADEMIC EXAMS**  
AT THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LISBON  
INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED TRAINING

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**Masters:**

Bioethics (6th Edition)

**Name of Student:**

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**Subject of Thesis:**

Medical Decision in Intensive Care – An Analysis in the Light of the Philosophy of Values

**Date of Defence:**

09/06/2009

**Mark:**

Very Good, by Majority

**Jury:**

**President:** Professor António Barbosa (FMUL)

**Orientator:** Professor Marta de Mendonça (FCSHUNL)

**Jury Members:** Professor Cristina Beckert (FLUL)



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**ABSTRACT**

The objectives of this study are twofold: First, to explore the notion of value, especially in the perspective of historical reasoning, as well as in the perspective of gnoseology, ontology, anthropology, metaphysics and theology. Furthermore, we wanted to know how values articulate with the diversity of clinical cases and ethical situations experienced in an Intensive Care Unit; especially what type of intervention they triggered or what weight they had on decision making. We tried to establish what influences values have on the objectivity of decision making.

The second part contains some conclusions from a semi-directed interview of physicians from Intensive Care Units of some Hospitals in the Lisbon area.

Using the interview we tried to articulate the values from a more theoretic point of view and their use in decision making in intensive care medicine. The pragmatic and technical aspects of decision making is still the most privileged by those making decisions, although there appears to be an increasing interest in decision making based on values. Decision making is only shared between physicians and does not involve other health care professionals. The majority of the interviewed people agreed that changing the values changes both, the way how they decide and the importance they attribute to some concepts, like, for example, the quality of life.

The answers were distributed in function of the hierarchy that the values are divided into during the decision making. The interviews showed heterogeneity of conflicts of values, values considered being good and bad decision in an ITU setting. Finally, we tried to find out, how an organizational ethics could help to minimize conflict of values in an ICU setting.

**Keywords:** Intensive Care Unit; Axiology; Decision making; Complex Adaptive System; Organizational Ethics.