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Joint Phd VUB & ULiège
2020-2021

INVITATION to the Public defense of

Stefaan SIX

To obtain the academic degree of

'DOCTOR IN SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES' (VUB)

'DOCTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH' (ULIÈGE)

Towards a better understanding of what palliative sedated patients experience. Linking numbers to experiences.

The defense will take place on **Tuesday, 29th September 2020 at 3 p.m.**

and will be organised online via Zoom meeting

accessible through the following link:

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

and in Auditorium Vanden Driessche

Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Laarbeeklaan 103, 1090 Brussel

ADMITTANCE to the auditorium will only be granted upon presentation of the personal invitation from the PhD candidate.

Summary of the dissertation

Once death is imminent, a major concern is to assure maximal comfort. In case of untreatable suffering, palliative sedation may be chosen to assure comfort by reducing the patient's level of consciousness. An important question is whether a patient is still suffering or not. In case of (deep) palliative sedation communication is usually impossible, therefore caregivers have to assess the patient's comfort by observation. Recently, more sophisticated techniques from the neurosciences (fMRI, EEG) have found out that sometimes consciousness and pain is undetectable with the traditional behavioral methods.

In our first study we observed patients from the moment that palliative sedation was initiated until death and evaluated to what degree subjective caregiver assessments of comfort based on behavioural observations were in line with the results from two monitoring devices that measured objective neurophysiological parameters of level of sedation and pain.

In our second study we looked into what influences the attitudes of professional caregivers and family members regarding the use of such monitoring devices during continuous sedation until death. We developed a model that explained emerging attitudes and identified several facilitators and barriers to inform future implementation strategies.

In addition to the main studies, a self-reflective process is described as a tool to proactively prepare for doing a study on a very sensitive topic and bolster researcher resilience.

Curriculum Vitae

Stefaan Six (°1977) obtained a master's degree in Comparative Science of Cultures (anthropology) and a diploma of the first cycle in Psychology (Universiteit Gent).

He started his career as a high school teacher (2000-2006) teaching psychology, cultural sciences, communication science, behavioral sciences and introductory research methodology. In 2006 he made a career switch and became branch manager of a financial institution, which he continued until 2016. This was followed by his return to academia and an appointment as doctoral researcher at the Mental Health and Wellbeing research group at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. There he started a doctoral research project that would evolve into a joint doctorate with the University of Liège in 2017.

In addition to his research assignment, he also engaged himself voluntarily as a teaching assistant for the subjects Qualitative Research Methods for the Health Sciences, and Health Anthropology, under the supervision of Prof. Reginald Deschepper. He successfully completed the educational professionalization trajectory for teaching assistants.

Furthermore, at VUB he is also a member of the Faculty Council at the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Faculty Board member and a deputy member of the Education Council.