



SHAREABLE PDF

# Ethical obligations for supporting healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic

Alexander Supady <sup>1,2,3</sup>, J. Randall Curtis<sup>4,5</sup>, Crystal E. Brown <sup>4,5,6</sup>,  
Daniel Duerschmied<sup>1,2</sup>, Lyn Anne von Zepelin<sup>1,2</sup>, Marc Moss<sup>7</sup> and  
Daniel Brodie<sup>8,9</sup>

**Affiliations:** <sup>1</sup>Dept of Medicine III (Interdisciplinary Medical Intensive Care), Medical Center – University of Freiburg, Faculty of Medicine, University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany. <sup>2</sup>Dept of Cardiology and Angiology I, Heart Center, University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany. <sup>3</sup>Heidelberg Institute of Global Health, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany. <sup>4</sup>Cambia Palliative Care Center of Excellence at UW Medicine, Seattle, WA, USA. <sup>5</sup>Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA. <sup>6</sup>Dept of Bioethics and Humanities, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA. <sup>7</sup>Division of Pulmonary Sciences and Critical Care, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, CO, USA. <sup>8</sup>Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons/New York-Presbyterian Hospital, New York, NY, USA. <sup>9</sup>Center for Acute Respiratory Failure, Columbia University Medical Center, New York, NY, USA.

**Correspondence:** Alexander Supady, Medical Center – University of Freiburg, Dept of Medicine III (Interdisciplinary Medical Intensive Care), Hugstetter Strasse 55, 79106 Freiburg, Germany.  
E-mail: alexander.supady@universitaets-herzzentrum.de



@ERSpublications

**Based on considerations of justice, healthcare workers must be able to rely on support and protection from the societies in which they work. Prioritisation of healthcare workers for vaccines may be a way to maintain a functioning healthcare system.** <https://bit.ly/3pouzQu>

**Cite this article as:** Supady A, Curtis JR, Brown CE, *et al.* Ethical obligations for supporting healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Eur Respir J* 2021; 57: 2100124 [<https://doi.org/10.1183/13993003.00124-2021>].

This single-page version can be shared freely online.

*To the Editor:*

During the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, some healthcare facilities have, at times, reached the limits of their capacity to handle the surge in patient volume. Hospital beds and other medical resources became scarce as a consequence. Healthcare workers (HCWs), both clinical and non-clinical, were required to increase their workload, under extremely stressful circumstances.