

ethikos Volume 34, Number 5. May 01, 2020 Mitigation or suppression: Ethical choices for organizations during the pandemic

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The March 19 issue of *The Economist*^[1] discusses the stark choice ahead for healthcare workers, executives, and civic leaders to either suppress the infection rate through extreme lockdown procedures or mitigate it with less extreme measures.

The choice is presented as an ethical dilemma, pitting the health of the economy versus the health of the population. The article defines the economy as not just the exchange of goods and services for money, but rather the actual fabric of a society. So, then the ethical quandary resides in choosing between individual wellbeing versus that of the many.

How organizations choose to interpret the choice between mitigation and suppression is an expression of organizational ethics and culture. *The Economist* does not offer a solution to the problem, only a prediction of things to come: “Today governments seem to be committed to suppression, whatever the cost. But if the disease is not conquered quickly, they will edge towards mitigation, even if that will result in many more deaths. Understandably, just now that is not a trade-off any government is willing to contemplate. They may soon have no choice.”

¹ “Paying to stop the pandemic,” *The Economist*, March 19, 2020, <https://econ.st/3dJiyji>.

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