

**CENTRE FOR THE** INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF GERONTOLOGY AND VULNERABILITY

# When the family of the deceased said thank you. **Death notices in Geneva and Valais**

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#### Context

In demographic terms, the rectangularization of the survival curve has increased the link between death and old age. In Switzerland as in other developed countries, a large majority of deaths occur in very old age (OFS, 2014). This reality affects the representation of life's end.

In this new context, it is important to identify who is there and how to support the dying and their relatives during the last chapter of the life.

Area marked by Protestantism and also influenced by modern urban values, showing the economic structure of a large city.

**Contrasting for comparing** 

#### Valais (French part)

Geneva

Mountainous semi-urban area still characterized by a specific local culture, the impact of Catholicism, as well as 'traditional' relationship and family models

## **Death notices**

#### Definition

- Report the death to the community, factual and standardized (Eid, 2002)
- Everyone can have a death notice in a newspaper (Halbu and Vandagriff, 1987)
- Type of information : age, place of death, marital status, religion, number of children, family's feelings about the departure, gratitude
- Three types of notice: Main death notice, Association/company notice, Gratitude notice

Madame Nicole à Bogis-Bossey; Mademoiselle Annick et Lara; Madame et Monsieur Stéfanie , ainsi que et Vincent leurs enfants Alessia et Luca; Madame Eliane ainsi que les familles parentes, alliées et amies. ont le profond chagrin de faire part du décès de Madame

S'est endormi paisiblement au Castel le mardi 1ª janvier 2008	
Monsieur Georges	
Georges	
1923	

émoignages de sympa- eçus lors du décès de	Remerciements	
Manalaun	ofondément touchée par témoignages de sympa- e reçus lors du décès de	
wonsteur	Monsieur	
Georges	Georges	

Data

- Two newspapers: Nouvelliste (Valais) and Tribune de Genève (Geneva)
- Archive from **2008**
- People aged 65 years and older

Newspaper	Number of Individual death notices	% of total deaths
Nouvelliste	1264	90%
Tribune de Genève	2002	70%

- Data are representative in Valais
- **Data base:** three notices are linked together and anonymized
- 3 groups of people are mentioned in the notice: close family (partner, ch children), extended family (brothers and sisters, nephews, cousins) and fr
- 8 categories that **announces the death** : « Closed family», «close and «close family and friends», «close extended family and friends», «exte friends», «extended family», «friends», and «nobody» when no one is mentioned.

deaths	Henriette dite «Ninette» leur très chère maman, grand-maman, arrière-grand-maman, belle-sœur, parente et amie, enlevée à leur tendre affection le 6 mai 2008, dans sa 91e année. La famille tient à remercier la direction et l'ensemble du personnel de l'Hôpital pour leur gentillesse et leur dévouement, ainsi que Madame pour son accompa-	Font part de leur peine: Ses enfants: Georgette à Martigny; Claude et Ivan à Chemin-Dessous; Eliane et Daniel à Genève; Pierre-Edouard et Sylvie à Martigny; Bernard et Sonia à Martigny; Ses petits-enfants: Frédéric et Sandra, Virginie et Olivier, Vincent et Patricia, Marie, Julien, Olivier, Anne, Yoann, Fanny; Ses arrière-petits-enfants: Théo, Simon, Martin, Camille, Mathis; Ses belles-sœurs, son beau-frère, ses neveux et nièces: Rose-Marie et famille; Edith et famille;	parents, amis et connaissances qui, par leurs messages et soutien, ont pris part à leur peine. Un merci particulier: - à la doctoresse et au docteur - au personnel du Castel - au personnel du Service de gériatrie de l'hôpital de - au personnel du CMS de - aux membres de l'association - aux pompes funèbres janvier 2008. Nouvelliste : Gratitude notice
children and grand- <b>friends</b> . I extended family», ctended family and	gnement tout au long de ces mois d'hospitalisation. Un recueillement aura lieu en la chapelle du Centre funéraire de Saint- Georges, vendredi 9 mai, à 10 h 45. En lieu et place de fleurs, un don peut être adressé à la Ligue genevoise contre le cancer, Ccp 12-380-8. Cet avis tient lieu de faire-part.	Gaston et famille; La famille de feu Henriette et Fernand La famille de feu Edouard et Simone Ses cousins, cousines, ainsi que les familles parentes, alliées et amies. Selon le désir du défunt, les adieux ont eu lieu dans l'intimité de la famille. Adresse de la famille: Cet avis tient lieu de lettre de faire part.	La Caisse d'Assurance et l'Abattoir de ont la grande tristesse de faire part du décès de Monsieur <b>Guy</b> membre fondateur de l'abattoir et papa de Denis, tous deux membres du comité. Pour les obsèques, se référer à l'avis de la famille. Le Comité
nentioned.	Tribune de Genève: Main death notice	Nouvelliste : Main death notice	Tribune de Genève: Association/company notice

### Gratitude

#### Where is the gratitude?

- Gratitude is found into the two places, either directly in the  $\bullet$ main death notice or in a separate one "gratitude notice".
- 59.3% in Valais and 52.6% in Geneva of people expressed gratitude, but people do not express gratitude in the same notice.



#### Who said thank you?

- Sex of the deceased does not have any effect
- The two biggest advertiser categories are «close and extended family» and «close, extended family and friends», and they also tend to thank more.
- In Geneva, «extended family» express more gratitude that «close family» and only to care providers



#### The influence of the place of death

- 80% of the Swiss population die in a nursing home or in a hospital (OFS, 2009), whereas 91% want to die at home.
- Whatever the place of death, in Valais, we find gratitude in the same proportions. In Geneva, gratitude is expressed almost systematically when we know the place of death as «nursing home» or «hospital».
- Dying at home implies that less thanks are expressed

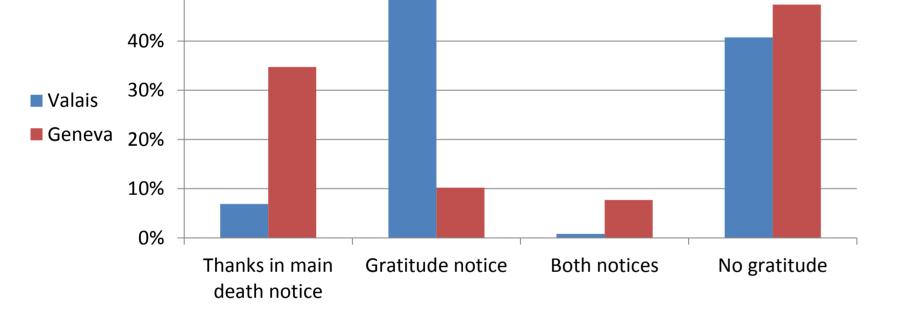




Figure 2: Gratitude by advertiser category and area in percent, 2008

GE

VS

family and Friends

family and extended family and

friends

GE

Close and | Extended | Extended

VS

GE

familv

VS

GE

VS

Friends

GE VS

Nobody

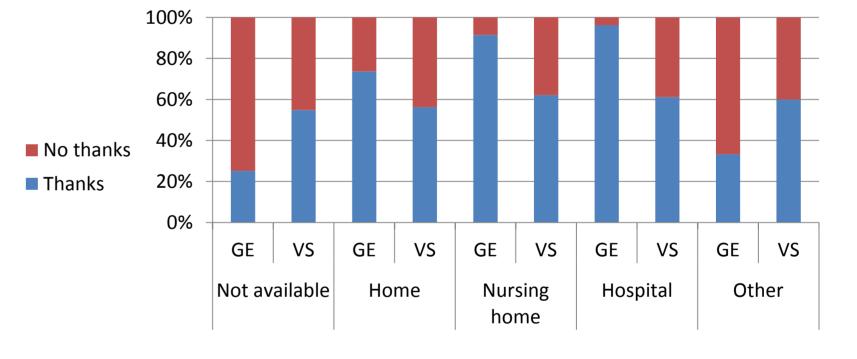
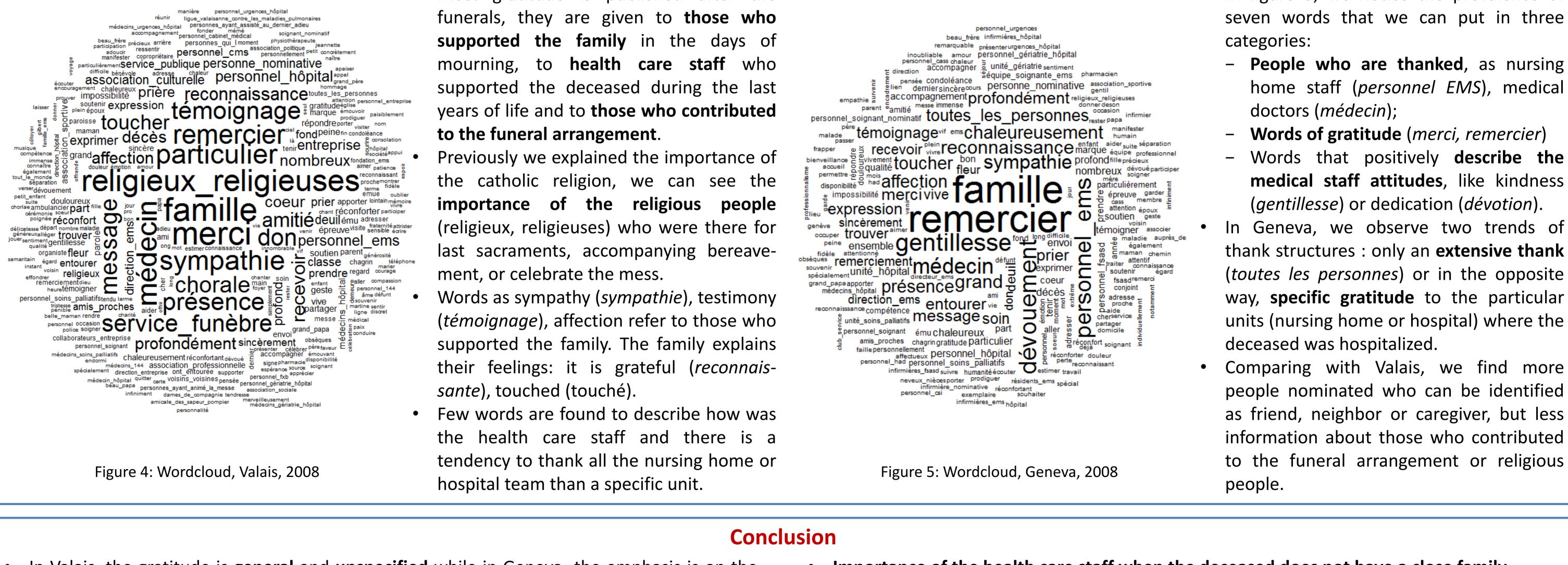


Figure 3: Gratitude by place of death and area in percent, 2008

#### How families and relatives expressed their gratitude?

Valais



Most gratitude is published after the

70%

60%

50% 40%

30%

20%

10% 0%

GE

Closed

VS

GE

Close and

family

VS

GE

VS

Close

friends

No thanks

Thanks

#### Geneva

- In figure 5, we notice the prevalence of seven words that we can put in three
  - **People who are thanked**, as nursing home staff (personnel EMS), medical
- **Words of gratitude** (*merci, remercier*)
- Words that positively **describe the** medical staff attitudes, like kindness (*gentillesse*) or dedication (*dévotion*).
- thank structures : only an **extensive thank** (toutes les personnes) or in the opposite way, specific gratitude to the particular

- In Valais, the gratitude is general and unspecified while in Geneva the emphasis is on the various care providers and their attitude.
- **Mourning** (public expression) and **funerals** (rituals) are important in Valais and much less in Geneva.
- Importance of the health care staff when the deceased does not have a close family
- The way the end of life is represented leads to the fact that more emphasis is put on death and mourning in Valais whereas in Geneva the focus is on the life of the deceased.

#### Source

OFFICE FEDERAL DE LA STATISTIQUE (OFS). 2014. La mortalité en Suisse et les principales causes de décès en 2012 – Actualité OFS, Neuchâtel, OFS, 4 p

EID, Mushira. 2001. The World of Obituaries: Gender Across Cultures and over Time, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 332 p. HALBUR Bernice and VANDAGRIFF Mary. 1987. Societal responses after death: a study of sex differences in newspaper death notices for Birmingham, Alabama, 1900-1985, Sex roles, 17, p. 421-436. OFFICE FEDERALE DE LA SANTE PUBLIQUE (OFSP). 2012. Stratégie nationale en matière de soins palliatifs 2013-2015, 50 p.

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