

# Editorial

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## Speechless

*The tide of mud engulfed the local community, part of the company's offices and the lunchroom (...) The warning sirens did not sound<sup>1</sup>. Vale's CEO says they did not sound because they were 'covered' in mud<sup>2</sup>. [But] there is technology for emergency sound warnings to be triggered under any circumstances<sup>1</sup>. [It has subsequently been found that] at least two warning sirens (...) are intact<sup>3</sup>.*

*It was 12:28 pm<sup>3</sup>. The victims were in the lunchroom and the company's offices of the tailings dam<sup>4</sup>, where it is estimated that most of them died<sup>5</sup>. [Up to date there are] 165 confirmed deaths, 160 identified bodies; 155 missing<sup>6</sup>.*

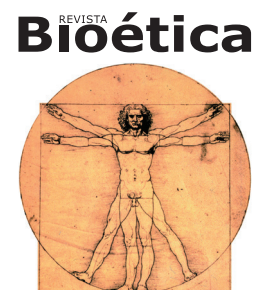
*The mining company was aware of risks at the dam<sup>7</sup>. Upstream tailings dams are considered to be more fragile because they use the tailing itself as a barrier instead of an external concrete structure<sup>8</sup>. The method is the simplest and least safe ... It is cheaper<sup>1</sup>. The inspection identified a number of problems, but a safety declaration was issued anyway<sup>8</sup>. The report mentions erosion and drainage problems<sup>5</sup>. [Despite this] Vale maintains that there were no signs of risk of dam collapse (...), an argument not considered credible by the Justice of Minas Gerais<sup>8</sup>.*

*Brazil has not advanced in dam inspection, experts say. The monitoring did not improve significantly after Mariana's tragedy. Experts say the 2010 federal law on National Dam Safety Policy still needs to be implemented<sup>9</sup>: There is a lack of supervision and effective indemnification of projects and enterprises of large size and risk, where specific interests often prevail over the law. These high-risk projects need, in addition to licensing, a differentiated monitoring of the areas likely to be affected, instructing possible and / or necessary measures, actions and prevention works<sup>10</sup>.*

*[To make matters worse], the Agência Nacional de Mineração - ANM (National Mining Agency) does not have the capacity to inspect the 740 mining dams<sup>11</sup>. The country has only 35 field inspectors (...) and the risk is potentially higher if there is no inspection<sup>12</sup>. The federal control body is the second most exposed to fraud and corruption, says the Tribunal de Contas - TCU (Federal Court of Audit)<sup>13</sup>.*

*[As if that were not enough] lawmakers received donations from companies, but deny defending the sector. The Brazilian Congress "mud" benchers block actions to improve dam safety. A small troop of Congressmen elected to the past legislature with donations from mining companies is very active in the affairs of the sector: it proposes changes in texts that have already resulted in withdrawal of inspection, occupy key posts in commissions and influence what happens in the Deputies Chamber<sup>14</sup>.*

*The succession of preventable tragedies that struck Brazil in recent weeks has created a chorus of citizens demanding more oversight. There is no doubt that oversight is important, fundamental in some areas. But madness to think that it is enough to put more agents in the streets demanding obedience to the technical norms to solve our security deficit. For a society to succeed, people need to be convinced that we must act in a manner that respects security standards, not because we run the risk of being fined - "having the duty to do the right thing" - if it is acceptable to use the*



*Kantian terminology - but because of “a sense of duty, “that is, because this is the rational position to follow, the one that serves our real interests”<sup>15</sup>.*

This is the principle of acting ethically. The golden rule of bioethics is to promote ethics applied to everyday life. It is this reflection that Revista Bioética seeks to stimulate in its readers, thus collaborating in citizen education.

**The editors**

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