

LCHE SEMINAR**Lien Teams****Tuesday December 1st, 2026. 14.00-15.00**

Salle Chasseral

Unisanté, Route de la Corniche 21, 1010 Lausanne (Station Vennes)

From Grievance to Accountability: Electoral Consequences of Hospital Closures in Switzerland

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David Weisstanner is Assistant Professor of Health and Social Policy and co-director of the Center for Health, Policy and Economics at the University of Lucerne. His research examines the politics of health and social policy, inequality and public opinion. His current work focuses on the politicisation of healthcare, health-policy trade-offs, public service provision, health inequalities, workforce challenges, and the political consequences of social and economic change.

ABSTRACT

Hospital closures are often seen as politically risky, yet evidence from Switzerland remains limited. We examine 35 hospital closures between 2016 and 2023 and their impact on electoral support for the party leading the cantonal health department. Linking a new dataset on hospital closures with Selects survey data from the 2019 and 2023 National Council elections (n=8,658), we find a clear sanctioning effect: voters living near a closed hospital are significantly less likely to support the responsible party. This pattern holds across regions and demographic groups. Rather than benefiting right-wing populist parties, closures are associated with stronger support for left-wing parties and attitudes. The findings suggest that voters hold governing incumbents accountable for reductions in public services.