

Lecture 13: global health ethics

Definitions:

***Health ethics:** Health ethics is the interdisciplinary field of study and practice that seeks to understand the values undergirding decisions and actions in health care, health research and health policy, and to provide guidance for action when these values conflict. Health ethics has a broad focus, taking in ethical issues faced by anyone involved in the medical area including patients and their families, concerning any issue related to the term health

It's broader than "medical ethics" and is part of "bioethics: ethics concerning all living things"

They're now included and studied in many health-related fields

Major concepts in health research: (understand)

***Human rights:** Fundamental freedoms and rights enshrined in a set of universal legal statements.

Important characteristics of human rights: they are acknowledged in international declarations; states and state actors are obliged to respect them; they cannot be waived or taken away (violated sometimes); they are interdependent and inter-related; and they are universal.

***Autonomy:** the ability of someone to be their own self and be independent

***Beneficence:** principle requiring responsible people to do what benefits people.

***Non-maleficence:** principle requiring that health care providers and researchers do not inflict undue harm, intentionally or unintentionally.

***Confidentiality:** The obligation to keep information secret unless its disclosure has been appropriately authorized

Difference between ethical, social and personal values in health:

Values describe what is important to an individual, a group, or a society. Values that are commonly invoked include autonomy, fairness, equity, compassion, honesty, freedom, solidarity, trust and respect

Sometimes a situation may give rise to a conflict between different values on different levels, or on the same levels but in groups with different values, mutual respect is crucial.

The relationship between health ethics and the Law:

"Normative frameworks"; they define how people should act

They're normally complementary but can conflict; something that isn't against the law can be unethical and vice versa.

Ethics is concerned with a broader set of relationships and behaviors than most forms of legal regulation

Ethical analysis of the law can stimulate important reform efforts or acts of civil disobedience.

In sum, while ethics and law are different in certain ways, ethics remains a foundation for law, and often provides a justificatory basis for legal norms.

key ethical issues in health research:

- Does the research have value for the study population?
- Who benefits from it?
- Are subgroups of the population treated fairly?
- Are the rights and well-being of individual research participants protected?

Major concepts in health research: (understand)

***Equity:** unequal distribution of some goods to bring about an equal outcome, responding to unjust and unfair health differences.

***Egalitarianism:** A belief in equality. However, egalitarians disagree about what it is that should be equal.

***Justice:** "giving people what they deserve."

***Informed consent:** Agreement to a certain course of action on the basis of complete and relevant information by a competent individual without coercion (persuasion)

***Privacy:** seeks to protect a person from scrutiny by others. a person sharing information only when they choose to.

***Health maximization:** as large as possible beneficial impact on health obtained by resources allocation

The Importance of Ethical and Human Rights Issues in Global Health:

Ethics and human rights stop the violation of peoples health, whether intentionally or unintentionally, show the way for researches to be humane and ethical, stop the violation of one group for the sake of the other and laws bind governments to respect the people's health, all this contributes to better global health

Future Challenges in Global Health Work

Students of global health get insufficient exposure to ethical issues, No mechanisms of enforcement of humans rights, Shortage of trained personnel for reviewing research for ethical issues, Lack of reviews of how investments are made, There is no clear definition regarding the human rights in global research in particular in low and middle income countries.

So basically, unethical violations of human rights are prone to happen, especially in misfortunate people.

Health issues regarding groups:

1- because of socio-economic differences at multiple levels, some people might benefit from studies at the expense of less fortunate others, Unfairness can be reduced or eliminated by ensuring that study populations enjoy the benefits of the research.

2- Research tends to find a drug, to sell it and benefit; because of less commercial success in poor communities, they receive less care from investigators.

3-when businesses patent new drugs or devices and want to ensure that product sales recoup investments and generate profits. laws increase the price of new drugs and devices and can thereby severely restrict or prevent access to life-saving therapies for resource-limited populations. (problem in HIV-AIDS community)

4- **related to cultural relativity.** It is sometimes asked whether ethical standards are universal, given that different people in different countries may hold different values or place different weights on common values.

5-**concerning international research,** especially where investigators from wealthy countries conduct research in impoverished settings where participants are especially vulnerable or where language and cultural barriers make informed consent difficult. (**heated example → standards of care: how much care should study participants receive?**)