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Public Hearing

International Perspectives on Pandemic Preparedness and Response

Online Meeting • 27 May 2021, Berlin

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As a part of its ongoing enquiry into the [normative issues of dealing with pandemics](#), the German Ethics Council is currently developing longer-term perspectives that go beyond the Coronavirus crisis. At the latest when a pandemic turns into a public health emergency of international concern, its effective control can only be achieved through the worldwide cooperation of a multitude of actors. Now, the Ethics Council attends to this global dimension of pandemic control in a Public Hearing. By exchanging ideas with international experts, the Council members intend to learn from the experiences made in other countries during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, tensions between national interests and the postulates of global justice and solidarity will also be addressed.



Among others, the following questions will be discussed with the experts:

- What ethical principles were used to decide on pandemic response measures in different countries?
- In an international comparison, which strategies were particularly successful in controlling the pandemic?
- Which communication strategies have proven successful in winning citizens' acceptance of restrictions on their liberties related to the pandemic?
- What role can and should vaccination programmes play in pandemic response in the long term? What obstacles have to be overcome on a global scale?
- How can the commitment to international solidarity be strengthened in the fight against the pandemic?
- What could a new normality with or after the Covid-19 pandemic look like?

- 1:30 pm** **Welcome address**
Alena Buyx · Chair of the German Ethics Council
- Chairs:
Frauke Rostalski · German Ethics Council
Andreas Kruse · German Ethics Council
- 1:35 pm** **Ethical Issues in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Are Lessons ever Learned?**
Ross Upshur · University of Toronto, Dalla Lana Faculty of Public Health
- 2:15 pm** **Ethical Governance during Covid-19: The United Kingdom Experience**
Jonathan Montgomery · University College London, Faculty of Laws
- 2:55 pm** **International Cooperation to Increase Access to Covid-19 Vaccines**
Felix Stein · University of Oslo, Centre for Development and the Environment
- 3:35 pm** **Questions to the experts**
- 3:55 pm** **Closing words**
Alena Buyx · Chair of the German Ethics Council
- 4:00 pm** **End of the Hearing**

Alena Buyx
Chair of the Council



Frauke Rostalski
Chair of the event



Andreas Kruse
Chair of the event



Ross Upshur

University of Toronto,
Dalla Lana Faculty of Public Health



Presentation on:

Ethical Issues in the Covid-19 Pandemic: Are Lessons ever Learned?

Professional Curriculum

Ross Upshur BA (Hons.), MA, MD, MSc, MCFP, FRCPC, FCAHS is currently the Dalla Lana Chair in Clinical Public Health and Head of the Division of Clinical Public Health at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Scientific Director, Bridgepoint Collaboratory for Research and Innovation and Associate Director of the Lunenfeld Tanenbaum Research Institute, Sinai Health. At the University of Toronto, he is a Professor in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and the Department of Family and Community Medicine, affiliate member of the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology, member of the Centre for Environment and Adjunct Senior Scientist at the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences. He is a staff physician at Bridgepoint Active Healthcare, Sinai Health. He is an elected Fellow of the Hastings Center and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. During Covid-19 he has served as the Co-Chair of the WHO Ethics and COVID-19 Working Group and is a member of the WHO ACTA Ethics and Governance Working Group. Additionally he has served on the Ontario COVID-19 Bioethics Table and the COVID-19 Vaccine Prioritization Sub-Group.

Abstract

In this presentation, I will outline some of the key ethical issues that have arisen globally and locally during the Covid-19 pandemic. Using examples from past epidemics I will show the structural similarity of ethical challenges that arose in previous significant infectious disease outbreaks. I will analyse ethical concerns related to managing uncertainty through research, the duty to care of health care providers, issues related to the implementation of public health measures, resource allocation and global health ethics. Drawing on my work as Co-Chair of the WHO Ethics and COVID-19 Working Group, I will discuss the limitations of addressing these challenges through the application of existing ethical frameworks and point to the need for more attention to integration of learning from implementation science, knowledge translation and health communication in the dissemination, integration and application of ethics advice during pandemics.

Jonathan Montgomery
University College London,
Faculty of Laws



Presentation on:
**Ethical Governance during Covid-19:
The United Kingdom Experience**

Professional Curriculum

Sir Jonathan Montgomery is Professor of Health Care Law at University College London, UK. He is also Chair of Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and Co-Chair of the Moral and Ethical Advisory Group within the Department of Health and Social Care for England, UK. In 2020, he chaired the Ethics Advisory Board on the UK's proposed contact tracing app (<https://covid19.nhs.uk/pdf/ethic-advisory-group-report.pdf>). In 2021, he led an expert deliberation for the Ada Lovelace Institute on vaccine passports (<https://www.adalovelaceinstitute.org/report/checkpoints-vaccine-passports/>). He has previously chaired a number of national bioethics bodies, including the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, The Health Research Authority and the Human Genetics Commission. His research focuses on health care law and the governance of bioethical issues. In addition to academic publications he has been involved in developing guidance for health professionals and policy-makers. This has included work on confidentiality for the General Medical Council and co-authoring a chapter on “ethics and the social contract for genomics in the NHS” in the Chief Medical Officer for England's report for 2017. He was knighted for services to bioethics and healthcare law in the 2019 New Year Honours and elected Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences in 2021.

Abstract

In 2019, the United Kingdom was regarded as well prepared to respond to a pandemic. It had an agreed ethical framework and experience of working with it in relation to the influenza pandemic of 2009. However, the pace of decision-making that was required made it difficult to work in the same way during the Covid pandemic and ethical governance has been fragmented. The Nuffield Council on Bioethics (the UK's nearest equivalent to the German Ethics Council) has provided important ethical analysis in the public domain but sits outside of Government. The Moral and Ethical Advisory Group has provided confidential advice to civil servants and health service bodies but has not issued public facing statements or a revised ethical framework. Specific groups were established to address ethical issues in relation to particular initiatives and the presentation will illustrate this in relation to contact tracing apps. This represents considerable effort to address ethical issues but with limited co-ordination. The roles of ethical advice, scientific assessments and political considerations in Government decisions are not easy to distinguish.

Felix Stein

University of Oslo, Centre for
Development and the Environment

Presentation on:

International Cooperation to Increase Access to Covid-19 Vaccines



Professional Curriculum

2020–2023: Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Oslo, Norway; Studying public private partnerships and vaccine financing in the Covid-19 pandemic. 2019–2022: Affiliate Lecturer, University of Cambridge, UK; Acting as the Joint Founder and Managing Editor of the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Anthropology (www.anthroencyclopedia.com). 2020: Senior Research Affiliate, Global Health Research Unit Tackling Infections to Benefit Africa (TIBA), University of Edinburgh, UK; Focusing on global health efforts against Covid-19 in sub-Saharan Africa. 2017–2020: Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Edinburgh, UK; Funded by the Wellcome Trust, focusing on water provision & the fight against cholera in Haiti – including 2 years of field research in Port-au-Prince. 2018–2019: Affiliate Lecturer, State University of Haiti (UEH), Haiti; Providing a 4 session Masters course on Economic Anthropology. 2016–2017: Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Cambridge, UK; Studying anthropology’s impact on the British public. 2014–2016: Editorial Assistant, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (JRAI). 2011–2013: Management Consultant, [Major management consultancy], Germany; Private and public sector consulting in health and insurance; Research on the European sovereign debt crisis. 2008–2011: Research Affiliate, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), UK; Research on poverty measurement indicators; Restructuring of the Amartya Sen research library. 2005–2006: Researcher, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Mexico; Research and implementation of the “commons” concept as a strategic cornerstone of the Foundation.

Abstract

As the novel coronavirus began to spread in early 2020, global health policy makers were adamant that they would avoid an international scramble for vaccines. The World Health Organization and partner organizations therefore launched a public private partnership called COVAX. It promised to speed up global vaccine access and render it more equitable. This presentation will explain how COVAX was meant to work, how it works in practice, and what political and ethical issues it has raised so far. It argues that COVAX is best understood as an international vaccine buyers’ club for countries, which has been undermined by bilateral vaccine purchasing agreements. COVAX is also a tool to subsidize pharmaceutical companies, one that remains difficult to assess as its contracts are secret. Principal ethical questions it raises are to do with the value of life at home vs abroad, and the problem of finding a fair price for life-saving vaccines.

Upcoming event:

Annual Meeting

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