

## Editorial

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### Note from the Editor

The Ethics and Health Unit is keen to relay information about ethics activities that occur at WHO and elsewhere, on a bi-annual basis, and encourages newsletter submissions from partners.

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### Editors:

Michelle Allain  
Cansu Canca  
WHO interns

The Ethics Unit would like to welcome Dr. Ruediger Krech, who as of 1 October 2009 re-joined WHO as Director for the Department of Ethics, Equity, Trade and Human Rights (ETH). Dr. Krech has a background in medicine, educational sciences, and holds a doctoral degree in public health. He has previously held a number of managerial positions within and outside the WHO. Recently, members of the unit sat down with Dr. Krech to discuss his thoughts about the department, the unit and his vision for the future.

### Q. What motivated you to return to WHO and assume the position of ETH director?

I've been quite lucky to see how global health works from various perspectives: I have worked in a hospital, in academia, at WHO in a Regional Office, in a bilateral agency and in one of our partner countries. What made me come back is that there is a great opportunity to better coordinate bi- and multilateral cooperation. Global health will be changing as innovations in public health occur. And as health is a 5.1 trillion USD market, there are multiple interests involved. The global health community has to ensure that we apply certain ethical principles at all levels of public health.

### Q. What is your vision for the ETH department/Ethics Unit and how do you see it evolving over the next 5 years?

Within the department, we are working on the second big strand of public health: the connectedness of social, political, economic and health development. We are fostering a rights based approach to health, reducing health inequities and promoting that governments use a health lens for policy making. This does not mean that we, as public health professionals, want to guide decision makers in agriculture, education or finance but we want them to seriously consider the health effects of their policy decisions. I believe that this will contribute to increased ethical considerations in public health practice.



For the specific work of the Ethics Unit, we need to focus our attention in supporting national ethics committees, using our convening power and fostering processes that lead to global consensus building on specific public health issues of primary ethical concern.

### Q. What do you believe are the Unit's biggest strengths?

The Ethics Unit has shown incredible strength in supporting WHO's work in various public health fields, such as: tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and neglected tropical diseases. It has developed into a resource centre so that those engaged in disease or population health specific programmes can cross check whether their work is ethically sound. The unit has also focussed its work on reaching out to different partners and has been instrumental in putting ethics onto the global (public) health agenda.

### Q. How do you think the Unit will face new and upcoming ethical issues impacting the global community? What do you believe some of those main issues will be?

The Ethics Unit of WHO will not be able to do these things alone. We need to create innovative partnerships, identify the most pressing priorities in ethics and health, identify the different responsibilities of partners, and implement accountability mechanisms. This is where the Ethics Unit of the WHO can be an added value to the global community.

## Current Projects & Activities

### WHO Taskforce on Ethical Issues in Tuberculosis



TB patient receives treatment, - WHO/Jean Chung

Tuberculosis (TB) prevention, care and control raise important ethical and policy issues that need to be adequately addressed. These concerns have been accentuated by the problem of Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB) and, most recently, by the emergence and spread of Extensively Drug Resistant TB (XDR-TB), which is especially difficult to detect and treat.

In 2008, the Ethics and Health team and the Stop TB Department jointly established a taskforce on Ethics & TB that will guide WHO and its Member States on how to address the ethical issues that arise in TB programs. The goal is to develop a document "WHO guidance on ethical issues in TB care and control."

The taskforce gathered for its 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in December 2008 at the Joint Centre for Bioethics of the University of Toronto, a WHO Collaborating Centre for Bioethics. For this meeting, four background documents were produced, covering the topics of diagnosis and treatment, obligations and rights of health care workers, patients and communities, public health measures and research.

A 2nd meeting of the Task Force occurred 26-28 August 2009 at WHO in Geneva, with a view to developing a guidance document for TB programs. A draft guidance document was reviewed in a consultation which took place on 15 October 2009 in Geneva. Further drafts will be presented at several meetings in the coming months in order to help finalize the guidance document. In addition, training materials for ethics and TB are being developed for use in workshops for program managers and other stakeholders in order to build capacity at the local level. A regional training workshop is planned to take place in Athens, Greece, 10-12 May 2010, which will involve about 50 participants from Ministries of Health and national TB programs, mainly from Eastern European and Central Asian countries.

### Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza

In view of the ongoing Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 Influenza, WHO's Ethics and Health team continues its work to address the wide range of challenging ethical issues raised by pandemic preparedness and response. The WHO guidance document "Ethical considerations in developing a public health response to pandemic influenza", published in 2007, is a widely used framework for addressing ethical considerations. Available on the WHO website. The four discussion papers, which had laid the foundation of this guidance document,

have also been published and are available online. A regional workshop on ethics of pandemic preparedness, jointly organized by CDC and TEPHINET in collaboration with WHO, took place in Vietnam, 22-25 March 2010. The goal was to discuss regional particularities and ways to implement ethical considerations in national pandemic planning. Participants from about 20 Member States, Ministries of Health and national pandemic preparedness agencies attended.



## WHO Global Network of Collaborating Centers for Bioethics

On 19 April 2009, in a meeting hosted by the University of Chile, the Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centers for Bioethics was formally launched. So far, 6 institutions are part of the network:

- **Joint Center for Bioethics**, University of Toronto, Canada
- **Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios in Bioética**, Santiago de Chile
- **University of Miami Ethics Programs**, Miami, USA
- **Espace éthique AP-HP**, Paris, France
- **Institute of Biomedical Ethics**, University of Zurich, Switzerland
- **Centre for Philosophy and Public Ethics**, Australian National University, Canberra, Australia

The Network will support the WHO Secretariat to implement its mandated work in the field of ethics and health. It will focus its collaborative activity in three key domains: public health ethics, research ethics, and clinical ethics.

In July 2009, the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics (CAPPE) at the Australian National University in Canberra, was offi-

### 2nd Regional Meeting of National Bioethics Committees on Ethics of new Biotechnologies

Jointly organized by the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office (EMRO) and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the meeting was hosted in Damascus, Syria on 24-25 June 2009. Representatives from Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen had an opportunity to discuss their experience and explore ways to strengthen national Bioethics Committees in the region.

cially designated as a WHO Collaborating Centre (CC) for Bioethics. On 28 January 2010, at the occasion of a joint workshop entitled "Promoting Dual Use Ethics", Andreas Reis from the WHO Ethics and Health team offered the WHO flag to the head of the newly designated CC, Michael Selgelid, for use in future collaborative activities.

For more information about CAPPE/ANU:  
<http://www.cappe.edu.au>

For more information about the network:  
<http://www.who.int/ethics/partnerships/en/>



Dr. Andreas Reis (Left) presents the WHO flag to Michael Selgelid (Right)

The next meeting of the Global Network of collaborating Centers for Bioethics will be hosted by the University of Toronto in May 2010.

### Global Summit of National Bioethics Advisory Bodies

The Ethics and Health team serves as secretariat of the Global Summit of National Bioethics Advisory Bodies. Following the 7<sup>th</sup> Global Summit, hosted by the French National Consultative Ethics Committee for Health and Life Sciences, in Paris in September 2008, **the next summit will take place on 26-27 July, 2010 in Singapore**. It will be hosted by the Bioethics advisory committee of Singapore. More information is available at:

<http://www.bioethics-singapore.org/>

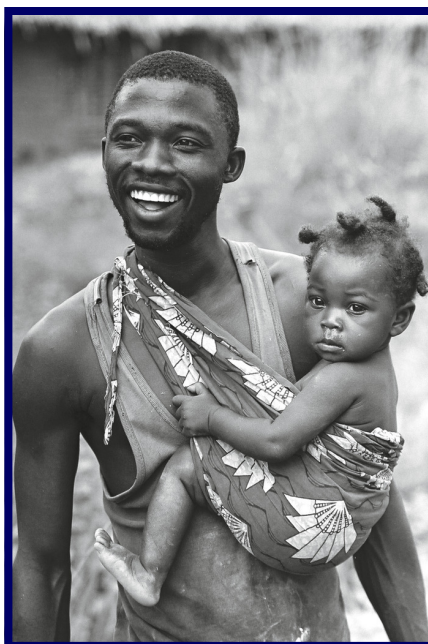
<http://www.who.int/ethics/globalsummit/en/>

# Research Ethics

## Research Ethics in International Epidemic Response

In response to the request for guidance, WHO's Global Influenza Programme and the Ethics and Health team jointly convened a technical consultation on "Research Ethics in International Epidemic Response", which took place in Geneva, 10-11 June 2009. This meeting brought together experts of international organizations, government agencies and ministries, professional medical associations, academic and research institutions, as well as staff of various WHO departments and Regional Offices, to :

- identify and elucidate the ethical issues related to public health research and related activities during infectious disease outbreaks



WHO/Marko Kokic

- provide WHO with urgently-needed guidance in this area, with specific focus on the question of whether and how prospective ethical review should take place for these activities, and

- provide practical guidance to public health practitioners and researchers in the field.

The discussion occurred in the context of the current influenza A(H1N1) event (which was declared a "pandemic" on 11 June 2009, the second day of the meeting), but it was noted during the meeting that the suggestions and approaches developed by the group could be

extended to other infectious disease emergencies as well.

## Manual for Research Ethics Committees

Following the implementation of several training activities in Africa, the Ethics and Health team published a manual on "Basic concepts for capacity building for research ethics committees." This manual describes basic concepts, including ethical analysis, risk/benefit evaluation, confidentiality and the informed-

consent process, along with the role of the research ethics committee, the organization of a training programme and the issue of financial conflicts of interest.

The manual is available in both English and French, the Spanish version will be published soon:

[http://www.who.int/eth/Ethics\\_basic\\_concepts\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.who.int/eth/Ethics_basic_concepts_ENG.pdf)

<http://www.who.int/eth/Ethics>



## Coordination Between Regulatory Authorities and Research Ethics Committees

The Ethics and Health team has been working with the WHO department of Immunization, Vaccines and Biologicals on modalities to improve the coordination between ethics review of vaccine trials and regulations of new vaccines at national level. In September 2009, two regional meetings took place in Abuja, Nigeria, and Bangkok, Thailand; concrete recommendations were formulated to ensure that effective mechanisms of ethics review and regulations are in place in countries. Training activities including online courses will be implemented in 2010 in order to strengthen regulatory capacity and improve coordination with ethics review. The project will start in the African region and include the development of clinical trial registration as an important tool to improve transparency in research for health.

## Norms and Standards for Research Ethics Committees

In November 2009 a two-day consultation was convened by WHO's Ethics Review Committee (ERC). Five international organizations were represented; experts from Brazil, Morocco; China, India, South Africa, Uganda, Malawi Zimbabwe and the United States of America presented the situation of RECs in their respective countries. Existing guidelines at national and international levels were presented and recommendations were formulated, in particular, the need to update WHO's guidelines for Research Ethics Committees initially published in 2000 (see). The Ethics and Health team is working in close collaboration with the ERC and other WHO departments on a new version of these guidelines which should be available before the end of 2010 after an extensive process of public consultation.

## Intern and Volunteer Program

Leading an active internship program, the Ethics and Health team has hosted over 100 interns from various backgrounds around the world. To provide insight into the intern experience, we spoke to a former intern, Gabriela Montorzi, about her internship in the Unit. Gabriela, originally from Argentina, studied Biology before doing her Masters in Bioethics and Law, and her PhD in Life Sciences. Currently, she is working as a Programme Officer at the Council on Health Research for Development in Geneva.

**Q. What led you to apply for a WHO internship in the Ethics and Health team and how has it impacted your career?**

I applied for a WHO internship because I wanted to have practical experience in the field of Ethics. The impact of the internship on my current career has been key from a networking point of view. Through Dr. Marie-Charlotte Bouësseau, I was able to get to know the organization where I currently work.

**Q. What do you feel was the most beneficial aspect of your internship?**

The networking possibilities, being immersed in the day to day WHO environment, and hence having the possibility to sense more concretely the positive and negative sides of such an organization.

**Q. What tasks/projects were you involved with during your internship?**

During my internship I worked half of the time for the Ethics and Health team and the other half for the ERC (Ethics Review Committee). In ERC, I developed an assessment of the committee's functioning since its inception two years before. This resulted in a report.

