Ethics, Human Rights, Pandemics
Resource Pack
2020

Overview

This curated resource collection includes reports, articles and guidelines that consider both ethics and human rights, as they relate to public health practice and clinical research in the setting of national and international emergencies, particularly epidemics and pandemics.

In addition to ethical frameworks developed specifically for pandemic preparedness, the collection also includes insights from prior guidelines focusing on research, compassionate use therapeutics and vaccine trials for Ebola. Other resources outline how to conduct research effectively and ethically in the context of global emergencies.

Browse through these documents to create your own collection. Educators may find this curated collection useful for generating evidence-based discussion and debate using the contemporary context of COVID-19.

These resources on ethics, human rights and pandemics is part of a COVID-19 Teaching Toolkit under development by the Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University. New resources will be added as they become available.

The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods.
Resource Pack: Ethics, Human Rights, Pandemics

Selected Resources

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**Article. Pandemic Disease, Public Health, and Ethics**
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13346
This article from Oxford University press highlights pressing challenges which surface when responding to pandemic disease, such as the coordination in global governance, priority setting, and acting in isolation and quarantine. This document serves as a guiding tool for public health officials who are working amidst a crisis to serve the public's needs.

GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13341
This document from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and World Health Organization (WHO) provides specific guidelines for research as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. While human subjects research is being done quickly and rigorously, this document is published to ensure that the research is also being conducted ethically. The contributors to the document suggest the installation of new committees to oversee these efforts. The report suggests that digital communications can help in streamlining ethics review processes and decision-making will need to prioritize the well-being of subjects.

**Report. Managing Ethical Issues in Infectious Disease Outbreaks**
Managing Ethical Issues in Infectious Disease Outbreaks. World Health Organization 2016.
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13313
This report from the World Health Organization (WHO) outlines guidelines for policymakers, researchers, and public health professionals on the ethical issues likely to arise with infectious disease outbreaks. Outbreaks bring uncertainty, social and institutional disruption, and fear and distrust that may compete with ethical values. This report serves as a complementary set of guidelines to existing guidance on ethics in public health and can help set up decision-making systems and procedures to ensure that ethically appropriate responses are taken if an outbreak occurs. Health-care institutions, international organizations, and other actors involved in epidemic response must collaborate to develop practical strategies and tools to apply these principles to their own settings and contexts. The report particularly emphasizes the following ethical principles that can be applied to infectious disease outbreaks: justice, beneficence, utility, respect for persons, liberty, reciprocity, and solidarity.

**Resource Portal. Integrating Ethics in Infectious Disease Outbreaks**
GHELI repository link: http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/12561
This resource portal from the World Health Organization (WHO) provides a platform of resources on ethical principles for public health officials and frontline workers engaged in the identification and prevention of infectious diseases. The site outlines key principles that govern decision-making, how to use them, and how to integrate ethics in every aspect of responses to an infectious disease outbreak. Topic sections include Ethics Matters, a video summarizing why ethics are important in epidemiologic responses; Ethics Issues, an illustrated summary of intersections between surveillance and research; Ethics in Action, an online case-based quiz to train viewers on strengthening effective responses; and Resources, with links to checklists, training courses, video materials, WHO publications, and other institutional resources.
This document from the World Health Organization (WHO) outlines 17 ethical guidelines for everyone involved in public health surveillance including government agency officials, health workers, NGOs, and the private sector. The guidelines aim to help policymakers and health practitioners approach the ethical issues associated with surveillance. Disease surveillance is essential for epidemic response but can also contribute to reducing inequalities of suffering and understanding the global burden of noncommunicable diseases. Public health surveillance can extend to environmental or occupational surveillance, as well as provide evidence to inform health policy and advocacy. This report highlights the importance of surveillance but also addresses its limitations and associated risks in order to fill the gap in international guidelines directly on public health surveillance.

This training manual from the World Health Organization (WHO) provides information on ethical issues related to research, surveillance, and patient care in the context of epidemics, emergencies, and disasters around the world. It aims to build on the existing International Health Regulations (IHR) that serve as a coordination of the management of events that constitute public health emergency of international concern, but hopes to fill the gap on other aspects of research, surveillance, and patient care for all countries. The manual has two parts: Part 1 covers ethical issues in research and surveillance such as ethics oversight and publication ethics, while Part 2 overviews patient care including triage, standards of care, and the professional duties of health care workers in emergencies. The manual includes seven core competences and 26 learning objectives that function as teaching modules to give participants a level of proficiency in ethical reasoning and awareness of ethical dilemmas that arise in global emergencies.

This report from the Oxford University Press balances the multiple factors taken into consideration when preparing for and responding to a public health emergency. Resource allocation and care for vulnerable populations require strategic decision-making and attention to ethical standards. With this in mind, the contributors outline best practices when responding to public health emergencies.

This collection of discussion papers from the World Health Organization (WHO) disseminates the key ethical issues in pandemic preparedness and response. This volume has the background papers prepared by the chairpersons in consultation with their working group members which convened to review the response. The working groups included experts in ethics, law, public health, WHO staff, and country representatives. The collection of discussion papers cover ethics and scarcity in a pandemic, antiviral drugs, priority setting in therapeutic care, and vaccination.
Resource Pack: Ethics, Human Rights, Pandemics

Report. Ethical Considerations in Developing a Public Health Response to Pandemic Influenza
GHELI repository link: https://repository.ghel.harvard.edu/repository/13326
This technical paper asks essential and crucial questions needed when planning for a pandemic. It highlights how essential it is to plan to cope with a pandemic in order to mitigate its impact. Some of the key general ethical considerations highlighted are: balancing rights, interests, values, transparency, public engagement, social mobilization, information, education, and communication. Priority setting must be maintained while also considering human rights when planning for social distancing measures. Core governmental responsibilities include developing core capacities for public health surveillance while adhering to international legal obligations. Of note, this document discusses the role and obligations of health care workers during an outbreak of pandemic influenza—moral obligations, professional obligations, contractual obligations, and non-contractual legal obligations. This document is especially important for policymakers, who must incorporate international considerations into influenza pandemic preparedness planning.

Article. Principles of the Ethical Practice of Public Health
GHELI repository link: https://repository.ghel.harvard.edu/repository/13335
This code of ethics document from the Public Health Leadership Society states key principles of ethics in public health. These are designed for institutions within the U.S. with public health missions, however, other organizations outside the public health sector and transnational organizations can still learn from these principles and apply them in their work. This guide serves to make institutions and the public aware of the right to health so that collective action can be taken to ensure that these ideals are upheld.

GHELI repository link: https://repository.ghel.harvard.edu/repository/13333
This report published by the Human Rights Watch addresses human rights concerns related to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, framing the pandemic in the context of international human rights law. The authors draw on the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights by the United Nations and the Siracusa Principles adopted in 1984 as international standards for defining and addressing human rights concerns. The report is divided into specific sections addressing issues such as protecting people in custody and in institutions, fulfilling the right to education despite school closures, addressing stigma and discrimination, ensuring humanitarian aid, and more. For each human rights concern, the report provides an overview of government responses thus far and suggests recommendations for governing bodies to ensure the respect of human rights for people through the outbreak.

Report. Addressing Human Rights as Key to the COVID-19 Response
GHELI repository link: https://repository.ghel.harvard.edu/repository/13349
This brief from the World Health Organization emphasizes protecting human rights as countries respond to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. The brief addresses numerous issues, including stigma and discrimination associated with COVID-19, gender equality and protecting women from violence, supporting vulnerable populations, quarantine and restrictive measures, shortages of supplies, and the obligations of governments to cooperate and provide international assistance. Incorporating human rights into COVID-19 response measures provides ethical guidance to countries as they make critical pandemic response decisions.
Teaching Case. Casebook on Ethical Issues in International Health Research
https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/44118. 
GHELI repository link: http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/10532
This casebook is a collection of 64 case studies, each of which raises an important and difficult ethical issue connected with planning, reviewing, or conducting health-related research. The casebook aims to help investigators, researchers, ethics review committee members, health authorities, and others by highlighting issues which need thoughtful analysis. Educators can use the case studies to look at specific examples of dilemmas which arise in international health research, allowing for in-depth discussion on these topics. The casebook includes a teaching guide, which aids those using these case studies in their teaching or training workshops by dissecting the process of teaching case studies.

Report. Global Consultation on Addressing Ethical Issues in Pandemic Influenza Planning
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13327
This consultation report from the World Health Organization (WHO) draws from discussions between representatives of international organizations, government ministries, academic institutions, and the WHO Secretariat to consider a broad range of ethical issues related to the development and implementation of pandemic influenza preparedness and response plans. It highlights key values, emphasizing the importance of social justice and protecting the vulnerable, global justice, and equity in access to information. Logistically, it outlines the details of isolation, quarantine, border control and social-distancing methods. There may be issues that arise between governments when developing a multilateral response to a potential outbreak of pandemic influenza, addressed in this document, while drawing on perspectives from multiple countries.

Report. Ethics of Using Convalescent Whole Blood and Plasma During the Ebola Epidemic
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13315
This report from the World Health Organization (WHO) discusses the ethical issues surrounding the potential use of convalescent whole blood and convalescent plasma in research and clinical settings. It is aimed at ethics review committees, researchers, national health authorities, and blood transfusion services who are directly working with these experimental interventions and treatments. The report includes background information on convalescent whole blood and convalescent plasma as potential interventions for people with Ebola virus disease, ethically relevant facts such as constraints and uncertainty, and analysis and recommendations for maximizing the benefits of efforts and managing risks based on the ethical issues that may arise.

Report. Ethical Issues Related to Study Design for Trials on Therapeutics for Ebola Virus Disease
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13316
This report summarizes the discussions of the Ethics Working Group of the World Health Organization (WHO) that included statisticians, methodologists, drug regulators, researchers, ethics committee members, and delegates from communities in West Africa affected by Ebola virus disease. The participants of the meeting convened to learn about clinical trial designs for Ebola virus disease, conduct ethical analyses of the available study design options, and provide advice on the relevant ethical considerations for utilizing various study designs. This resulting document from the meeting includes a decision matrix that takes into account many of the issues and considerations for all of the study design options; this matrix can be used by investigators, ethics committees, or other stakeholders when developing research studies.
Report. Ethical Considerations for Use of Unregistered Interventions for Ebola Virus Disease
Ethical Considerations for Use of Unregistered Interventions for Ebola Virus Disease: Report of an Advisory Panel to
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13317
This report summarizes a World Health Organization (WHO) consultation with an advisory panel to consider and assess
ethical implications for using unregistered interventions for Ebola virus disease. These unregistered interventions have
shown promising results in the laboratory and in animal models but that have not been evaluated for safety and
efficacy in humans. The members of the panel unanimously concluded that it would be acceptable to use unregistered
interventions as potential treatments for prevention, given certain conditions. Key parts of the ethical criteria that
makes it acceptable include transparency about all aspects of care, fair distribution in the face of scarcity, promotion of
cosmopolitan solidarity, informed consent, freedom of choice, confidentiality, respect for the person, and preservation
of dignity and involvement of the community. The panel also discussed moral obligations of physicians and other clinical
contexts for evaluating the safety and efficacy of these investigatory interventions.

GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13310
This report from the World Health Organization (WHO) summarizes the discussions of a scoping meeting about ethical
issues associated with vector-borne diseases, which particularly highlighted environmental and social determinants of
health, the ethics of vector control, new technologies, ethics of surveillance and research, and the ethics of mass public
health interventions. Over 25 international experts convened at this meeting and aimed to provide comprehensive
WHO guidelines. Their findings are compiled in this report which can be used to inform policy-making and future
guidance.

GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13323
This report from the World Health Organization (WHO) outlines ethical issues in research, specifically in public health
emergency situations. Although they are similar to those addressed in general ethics guidelines, differences in
emergency situations include changes in perceptions of risks, benefits and trust, heightened need for attention to
organizational values like accountability and transparency, and insufficient time for standard ethics review processes.
Some ethical issues which arise while researching infectious disease outbreaks include priority setting and ensuring
equitable access, isolation, and developing a multilateral response. This resource is highly valuable for researchers who
are making rapid decisions to ensure quick turnaround while also ensuring ethical accountability, and for educators who
are highlighting issues that come up in these situations.

Report. Research Ethics Committees: Basic Concepts for Capacity-Building
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13324
This report from the World Health Organization (WHO) covers concepts for capacity-building. This manual contains six
chapters on general topics: the role of research ethics committees, ethical analysis, training programs, evaluation of
risks and benefits, confidentiality and informed consent, with annexes covering financial conflicts of interest in medical
research and international guidelines and regulations.
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13321
This guidance report from the World Health Organization (WHO) addresses research ethics committees and researchers who design and implement studies with human participants. By protecting rights and well-being of the participants, ethics can be upheld in research studies, benefiting total communities. While research is meant to uncover the truth in complex issues, the means by which researchers come to these conclusions must also be ethical. The standards that are outlined for research ethics committees include pointers on their ideal composition, resources, training tips, and guidance on transparency.

Report. Expert Consultation on the Use of Placebos in Vaccine Trials
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13319
This report from the World Health Organization (WHO) summarizes an expert consultation meeting on the use of placebo in vaccine trials. The meeting participants examined the ethical issues in three main categories: overarching ethical principles relevant for all research studies, ethical issues relevant to placebo-controlled trials in general, and ethical issues specific to placebo-controlled vaccine trials when an efficacious vaccine against the condition under study already exists. A placebo-controlled trial is a common model for evaluating a new vaccine when there is no existing vaccine – in this meeting, experts discussed acceptability of use of placebos and identified situations where the conduct of a placebo-controlled trial may be justified. They also proposed procedural and substantive recommendations directed towards sponsors, researchers, research ethics committees, public health authorities, and policymakers.

Article. A Code of Ethics for Public Health
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13337
This editorial published in the American Journal of Public Health details the development of the widely recognized code of ethics by the Public Health Leadership Institute. The article details the process of writing the code, content of the code, dissemination and adoption of the code, and future improvements that can be made, especially when this code is being applied in practice. This code aims to make clear to the public the public health ideals that institutions strive for, as well as the morals for which they need to be held accountable.

Article. Public Health Ethics: Mapping the Terrain
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13338
This article published in the Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics lays out the groundwork for public health ethics by specifying what public health is, in order to delve deeper into moral considerations in public health ethics. Some examples of public health morals include: keeping promises and commitments, disclosing information truthfully, and producing benefits while removing harms. While public health efforts across institutions and disciplines can come off as disorganized, this article aims to lay the foundations anew by outlining the theories in public health ethics which will lead to the realization of social justice and human rights, as they relate to health.
Teaching Case. Global Health Research in an Unequal World: Ethics Case Studies From Africa
GHELI repository link: http://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/12532
This book-length collection of 42 fictionalized cases, published by Wellcome Trust and CAB International, offers a wide range of narratives on everyday ethical dilemmas and challenges that may accompany global health research in places with substantial global, political, and economic inequality. Each story-based case includes discussion questions, suggested group activities, an invitation to reflect on personal experience, further readings, and facilitator notes with learning objectives. Facilitator guidance, templates, and additional resources on using the case studies are also included. The ethical themes addressed in the cases are organized by relational issues—researcher/participant, community and family, institutional, and staff relationships—and a concluding index lists topical themes by alphabetical keyword. The second part of the book explores key perspectives informing the research approach, offers an analysis of the medical research context in Africa, and outlines what anthropology and the social sciences can offer.
This case collection is structured to be a user-friendly illustrated resource, suitable for high school or college student classes as well as training opportunities within medical research organizations, universities, collaborative sites, and non-governmental organizations.

Article. The New International Health Regulations
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13340
This article published in the Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics discusses the adoption of new International Health Regulations (IHR), a progressive step in global health. The purpose of the new IHR is “to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and which avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.” The new IHR emphasize the state’s right to protect its people’s health and underscore obligations to take health-protecting actions with careful considerations regarding trade and travel. The new IHR are broader in scope and are a pillar in global health governance.

GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13342
This report from the National Academies Press (NAP) highlights the intersections between clinical research and epidemic response, drawing from lessons from the Ebola virus. There are several considerations to be made, such as ethical planning during research trials, assessment of vaccine trials, engaging communities in research and response, and facilitating international coordination and collaboration. The lessons learned from the past show that properly designed clinical research trials—especially during global emergencies—are imperative in tackling the epidemic at hand.

Report. Research in Global Health Emergencies
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13344
This report published by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics underscores the importance of conducting sound and ethical research during public health emergencies, and what long-term effects and implications may be. National governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, and humanitarian agencies are especially influential actors, and their roles are outlined in this report.
**Article. Putting Human Rights at the Centre of Struggles for Health and Social Equality**
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13348
This article in OpenGlobalRights illuminates gaping social inequalities, which are threatening democracies across the globe. This article calls for ethical principles to be applied to address the roots of poverty. This can be made possible through social mobilization and democratic law reform. Human rights for social change should be woven into broader social movements and should not only be dependent on institutions, but should draw upon the power of individuals and communities alike.

**Article. Human Rights Protections are Needed Alongside PPE for Health-Care Workers Responding to COVID-19**
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13339
This article from The Lancet Global Health highlights the additional protections needed by healthcare workers – alongside personal protective equipment (PPE) – in order to ensure their safety. Along with exposure to COVID-19, healthcare workers have also experienced violence, harassment, discrimination, and censorship from governments and the general population. One example provided by the author focused on Dr. Li Wenliang, who was forced to sign a confession by the Chinese government stating he had made false statements and disturbed public order after he was the first to raise the alarm about COVID-19. Healthcare providers must have their human rights protected, alongside their health, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Resource Portal. Human Rights Watch: Coronavirus**
GHELI repository link: https://repository.gheli.harvard.edu/repository/13353
This web portal from the Human Rights Watch provides a collection of resources related to human rights and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The portal includes commentary, videos, reports, and news on a variety of topics ranging from the health of immigrants during the pandemic to unsafe work practices, to food security. Also available within the portal is the Human Rights Watch report on COVID-19, Human Rights Dimensions of COVID-19 Response.