

Exploration of public health ethics through a nursing lens

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Key Learning Objectives

- **Heightened awareness and knowledge of the importance of health care ethics as it relates to public health nursing practice**
- **An understanding of the importance of having moral space within the professional practice setting**
- **Increased understanding of how an ethics consultation process can assist public health nurses in enhancing their professional practice**

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Strengthening Ethics Knowledge

- Staff identified need for increasing ethics knowledge related to accreditation preparation
- 2006 Community Health Ethics Forum
- 2007 PH Nursing Ethics Working Group

PH Nursing Ethics Working Group

- facilitate learning and knowledge transfer related to public health ethics
- increase capacity for ethical decision making & discussion
- establish a multidisciplinary public health ethics committee (ultimate goal)

Public Health and Ethics

- Code of Ethics (CNA- 2008)
- Standard of Practice
- Literature

Fundamental Principles for Ethical Decision-Making

- 1) Respect for Autonomy
- 2) Beneficence
- 3) Non-Maleficence
- 4) Justice
- 5) Utility

Public Health

- PHN unique roles
(individual/family/community/population)
- Primarily concerned with populations
- Ethical tension -respect for individual
autonomy vs well-being of the community

Moral Space

- Dialogue opportunities
- Ethics reflection
- Facilitate moral community

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Case Study

- **Guided ethical discussion related to Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine**
- **Providing HPV vaccination in school systems has raised ethical dilemmas' locally, provincially and nationally**
- **Consult was not intended as a vehicle to debate the science for recommendation of HPV vaccination**

HPV Guided Ethical Discussion

- Questions posed :
 - **Is it ethical to deny access to publicly funded HPV vaccine?**
 - **Is it ethical to allow a religious institution to influence public health policy?**

Is it ethical to deny access to publicly funded HPV vaccine?

- Justice - Resource Allocation
- Beneficence
- Utility

Is it ethical to allow a religious institution to influence public health policy?

- Justice - Fairness
- Autonomy – Respect
- Relational Ethics

Justice

- School vaccine programs most efficient vehicle
- Decisions by faith communities directly affected access
- Social determinants of health may impact families abilities to access public clinics

Autonomy

- Respect
- Informed decision making regarding their health care
- Children more complex (parents)

Relational Ethics

- Web of relationship
- Relational lives may include relations with religion/church/faith community
- Respect for persons includes respect for the right of religious leaders to guide those they minister

Recommendations

- Increase public education resources HPV (translated)
- Consider expanding the Alberta Health Benefit programs to cover vaccination
- Continue to advocate greater access for publicly funded HPV vaccination
- Continue dialogue with religious leaders

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Reflective Practice

- Learnings of Public Health Ethics
- Application to your practise setting

References

- CNA Code of Ethics (2008)
- CHNC & CARNA standards of practice
- Bennett, Mary P, *Ethics and the HPV Vaccine Considerations for School Nurses*, J Sch Nurs, 2008; 24;275-283.
- Richard k. Zimmerman, *Ethical Analysis of HPV Vaccine Policy Options*. Vaccine; 2006; 24;4812-4820.
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AHS-PHN

Ethics Working Committee Members

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- Carla Ferreira (Village Square CHC)
- Caroline Hamill (Shag CHC)
- Claire Goldberg (Thornhill CHC)
- Meredith Levy (Acadia CHC) Jane Spice (Acadia CHC)*
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