

# Irish Emergency and Disaster Policy

## Pandemic

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# Ethical Principles Governing Pandemic Planning

- **Individual Liberty**

- Endeavouring to uphold the rights of the individuals as far as possible. In a public health crisis restrictions to individual liberties may be necessary.

# Ethical Principles

- Individual Liberty
- **Autonomy**
  - The principle of autonomy refers to ones right to make independent choices without external influences.

# Ethical Principles

- Individual Liberty
- Autonomy
- Public Interest:
  - Endeavouring to protect the interests of society as a whole. During a pandemic, public health officials may be required to limit individual liberties in order to protect the public interest or “common good”.

# Ethical Principles

- Individual Liberty
- Autonomy
- Public Interest
- **Proportionality**
  - The principle of proportionality requires that restrictions to individual liberties and measures taken to protect the public interest do not exceed what is necessary to address the actual level of risk or critical needs of the community.

# Ethical Principles

- Individual Liberty
- Autonomy
- Public Interest
- Proportionality
- **Justice**
  - Under the principle of justice, two separate issues arise. Equality refers to the equal respect for people's dignity irrespective of their social or cultural differences and the avoidance of stigmatisation and discrimination. Equity refers to the challenge of providing an entire community with the same quality of life and the same life expectancy. Generally, all patients have equal claim to healthcare. However, during a pandemic, when already strained health systems are under increased pressure, policymakers will need to decide about which health services to maintain and which to defer as well as deciding who will have priority access to medications and limited prophylactic resources.

# Ethical Principles

- Individual Liberty
- Autonomy
- Public Interest
- Proportionality
- Justice
- **Duty of Care**
  - All healthcare professionals are expected to adhere to professional codes of ethics and provide care to patients and respond to their suffering. During a pandemic, they will need to weigh the demands of their professional roles against other competing obligations *e.g.* their own health and the health of their families and friends.

# Ethical Principles

- Individual Liberty
- Autonomy
- Public Interest
- Proportionality
- Justice
- Duty of Care
- **Solidarity**
  - Solidarity refers to a union between members of a group or between nations. People united in solidarity share common responsibilities and interests. Solidarity is important between individuals, healthcare institutions, governments and nations. Solidarity calls for a collaborative approach to pandemics that sets aside conventional ideas of self-interest or territoriality at every level of society.



# Ethical Principles

- Individual Liberty
- Autonomy
- Public Interest
- Proportionality
- Justice
- Solidarity
- Duty of Care
- **Reciprocity:**
  - The principle of reciprocity is based on the concept of mutual exchange *i.e.* providing something in return for a contribution of some sort. During a pandemic, those who are expected to carry a disproportionate burden will require support from the community they serve and might also be compensated or rewarded in some form.

# Ethical Principles

- Individual Liberty
- Autonomy
- Public Interest
- Proportionality
- Justice
- Solidarity
- Duty of Care
- Reciprocity
- **Trust and Transparency:**
  - Public trust is essential in ensuring the success of a pandemic plan. In order to maintain public trust, public health decisions will need to be open and transparent and incorporate strict control measures.

# Ethical Principles

- **Individual Rights versus Public Interest**
  - limitations are placed on a person's right to autonomy, in order to strike a balance between upholding his/her rights on the one hand and protecting the public interest on the other
  - Quarantine, a public health initiative that is used to limit the spread of infectious disease, seriously disrupts lives, restricts personal liberties and jeopardises workers' livelihoods
  - Compulsory vaccinations and travel restrictions place similar limits on civil liberties
  - principle of proportionality requires that restrictions to individual liberty and measures taken to protect the public from harm should not exceed what is necessary to address the actual level of risk or critical needs of the community.
  - patients' privacy is upheld and their personal information is treated confidentially.
  - person's right to privacy may be restricted in the public interest or for the "common good".

# Ethical Principles

- **Justice**

- Equality refers to the equal respect for people's dignity irrespective of their social or cultural differences
- prevent stigmatisation and discrimination and to protect vulnerable people and minority groups
  - Impact of school closures
  - illegal immigrants
  - prison inmates
- Equity refers to the challenge of providing an entire community with the same quality of life and the same life expectancy
  - all patients have equal claim to healthcare
  - which health services to maintain and which to defer
  - priority access to vaccinations and anti-viral medications during a pandemic.
  - age considerations

# Ethical Principles

- **Solidarity Reciprocity**
- Global solidarity
- Local solidarity
  - *isolating* themselves
  - reporting for duty in the case of essential service providers
  - people fully participating in mass vaccination programmes to ensure “herd immunity”
  - neighbours and relatives to assist
- Reciprocity requires that society and healthcare institutions support those who face a disproportionate burden in protecting the public interest
- healthcare workers should be provided with safe working conditions as well as medical and psychological care,
  - priority access to vaccines or anti-virals

# Ethical Principles

- **Trust and Transparency**

# The importance of public-health ethics

- The central ethical dilemma, therefore, in public health, is to balance respect for individual freedom and liberty with the responsibility of governments to provide their citizens with some degree of protection in relation to health.
- In traditional bioethics, much emphasis is placed on the freedom of the individual.
- community benefits.

# Stewardship Model of Public Health Ethics

- stewardship model recognizes that governments should not coerce people or restrict their freedom unnecessarily.
- governments have a responsibility to provide the conditions under which people can lead healthy lives
- protecting its citizens from harm caused by others
- particular responsibility for reducing health inequalities and protecting the health of vulnerable groups such as children



# Section 38 of the 1947 Health Act

- Where a chief medical officer is of opinion, ..... a person in the area for which such medical officer acts .....that such person is a probable source of infection with an infectious disease and that his isolation is necessary as a safeguard against the spread of infection, and that such person cannot be effectively isolated in his home, such medical officer may order in writing the detention and isolation of such person in a specified hospital or other place until such medical officer gives a certificate (for which no charge shall be made) that such person is no longer a probable source of infection.

# Issues

- Plans
- First few cases
- Who to treat/provide prophylaxis
- Who to vaccinate
- Media
- Rest of Health System
- HCW's rights v responsibilities
- Pharma