



'Equity and Health Research Priority Setting: Developing WHO Guidance'

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Focus of the Talk

What is research priority setting?

Why is ethics important in research priority setting?

What is WHO's work on ethical research priority setting?

Why ethical priority setting should be a focus of research integrity?

What is research priority setting?

- Priority setting occurs whenever decisions or recommendations are made about what research will be conducted
- This can be *explicit*, e.g., conducting a priority setting exercise
- It can be *implicit*, e.g., creation of new grants program



World Health Organization

Global research agenda on health, migration and displacement

Strengthening research and translating research priorities into policy and practice

Virtual Launch

Monday, 30 October 2023 13:00 - 14:30 CET



Ethics and priority setting

- Decisions about what health research is conducted affect which populations receive important benefits
- The question of *who should benefit* is an ethical question
 - There is an ethical obligation to set priorities explicitly and in a principled way
 - Priority setting always involves value judgments

WHO's work in this area: Motivation

- Health research is a vital tool for improving global health
- But decisions about what research gets carried out are often opaque and do not appear to be guided by ethical principles
- Research Ethics Governance is a key work package of WHO's Health Ethics and Governance Unit
- WHO is developing guidance for integrating ethics into research priority setting

Aims of the guidance

1. Encourage explicit, systematic, and principled priority setting
2. Describe the ethical considerations relating to the allocation of scarce resources for health research
3. Guide key decision-makers in incorporating those ethical considerations into their work

Audience

- Anyone who makes decisions that affect what research is conducted
- Includes:
 - Funders
 - Policy-makers, including national and transnational bodies
 - Research Institutions
 - Researchers and research teams
 - Community organizations, professional associations, and advocacy groups

Process

- Guidance written with an expert writing group
- **Extensive consultations with different stakeholder groups**
- Draft guidance will be published online for public comment
- Peer review



Areas to cover/consider in guidance

1. Context

- Who is doing the priority setting? Consider development of specific tools
- Proportionality

2. Ethical Principles for Health Research Priority Setting

1. *Optimize social value*
2. *Acknowledge special obligations*
3. *Exclude unethical research*
4. *Follow fair procedures*

3. Putting the Principles into Practice

- i. *Preparatory stage*
- ii. *Priority setting stage*
- iii. *Follow-up stage*

2.2. Acknowledge special obligations

Entity	Obligations
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support socially valuable research relevant to citizens and residents• Restitution to populations harmed by the state• Wealthier countries have substantial international obligations
Non-profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize socially valuable research consistent with proclaimed mission• Consider whether mission should be changed to better align with optimizing social value
For-profit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pursue profit only when consistent with socially valuable research• Refrain from practices that make the overall research ecosystem less effective
Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If there are deep relationships with specific communities or patients groups, give higher priority to them• Otherwise, optimize social value of research

The relationship between Research Integrity & Research Priority Setting



[Foundation](#)

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World Conferences on Research Integrity

Cape Town Statement



The Cape Town Statement on Fostering Research Integrity through Fairness and Equity advocates for fair practice from conception to implementation of research and provides 20 recommendations aimed at all involved stakeholders.

Discussion questions

1. What can our work at WHO learn from research integrity, in terms of moving from implicit inclusion of ethics to an explicit, more systematic, approach?
2. How to engage the research integrity community in this work going forward, both in terms of:
 - I. Continued development of the WHO guidance; and
 - II. Inclusion of ethical priority setting in research integrity



Thank you !



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