Public Health Service Ethics: Essential Tools for Epidemiologists and Managers

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Do You Need Ethics?

• Public Health = public good.
• Are we justified in spending scarce resources (our time) on public health ethics (PHSE)?
Examples:

• Who gets served first in a pandemic?
• Who in the US decides to have highest infant and maternal death rates of wealthy counties?
• Most surveys don’t tell people they are HIV positive – so they may infect babies or other loved ones.
PHSE Combines Ethics of

• Human rights --- justice
• Clinical – respect for persons
• Management – transparency, accountability
Better PH Results if

- People trust you
- People see you are open and fair
- You ask people their desires and concerns
- You respect them
A set of tools

- Planning checklist
- Accountability
- Effectiveness.
- Solidarity
- Reach marginalized populations
- Include stakeholders
PH is like marriage

- Most people think it is good
- No single method or outcome
- More than one right answer
- Answers change over time
- If you think explicitly, you are more likely to succeed.
YOU are the PH Ethicists of the World

- Ancient sages and modern theorists of limited value
- Your practice defines the state of the art
- Share ideas at meetings
- TEPHINET website discussions