

Ethical Governance of Global Health Security in an Age of Polycrisis

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Issue and Objective

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed critical gaps in the effort to improve global health security and highlighted the need for ethical frameworks to guide preparedness and response efforts. This study examines the ethical challenges in governing global health security amidst intersecting crises. The objective is to identify and analyze key ethical dilemmas and propose principles for equitable, accountable, and effective health security governance.

Methodology and Approach

We conducted a scoping review of academic and policy literature on global health security ethics published between 2010-2023. The review sought to identify key trends in the evolution of health security ethics and analyze changes in response to emergence of increasingly challenging crises.

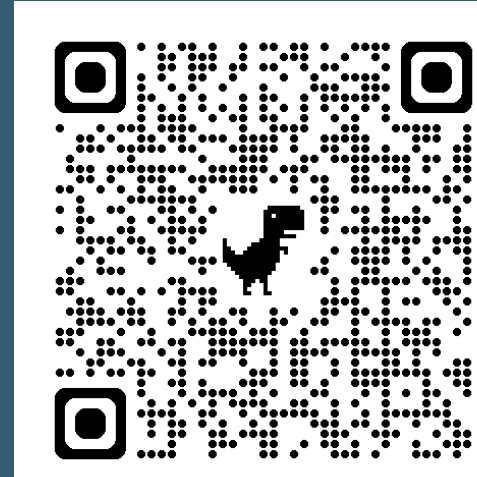
Results

Critical governance gaps were related to lack of global solidarity, reactivity, and lack of inclusive decision-making in global health institutions. The analysis highlights the importance of intersectionality in understanding differential impacts and vulnerabilities.

When using this toolkit, decision-makers should:

- Identify the specific issue or decision at hand.
- Consider each ethical principle in relation to the issue.
- Analyze the key dilemmas and considerations for each principle.
- Weigh the competing values and potential consequences.
- Document the reasoning behind the final decision.

References



It's important to note that these principles often intersect and may sometimes conflict with each other. The goal is not to find a perfect solution, but to make well-reasoned decisions that balance various ethical considerations. Additionally, what might be an appropriate decision in one situation may not be in another, depending on factors such as the severity of the threat, available resources, and cultural norms. Lastly, it's crucial to involve diverse stakeholders/rightsholders in the decision-making process and to maintain flexibility as new information becomes available. Ethical decision-making in global health security is an ongoing process that requires continuous evaluation and adjustment.

Discussion

We propose an ethical framework for global health security governance that includes mechanisms for improved coordination and international cooperation, proactive decision making, and balancing competing ethical imperatives. Recommendations focus on reforming global health institutions to enhance transparency and representation, strengthening national capacities for ethical analysis and decision-making, and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration to address health security as part of broader crisis preparedness efforts. Further research is needed on operationalizing ethical principles in diverse contexts and evaluating the long-term impacts of health security measures on vulnerable populations.

