

# HEALTH, HUMAN RIGHTS AND HEALTH FINANCING IMPLICATIONS

ETHICAL LENSES THROUGH WHICH  
TO EXPLORE CHALLENGING QUESTIONS

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**13th Caribbean Conference on National Health Financing Initiatives**

HEU, Centre for Health Economics and  
Anguilla Social Security Board

6-8th November 2019  
Anguilla

# THE ROLE OF ETHICS IN OUR DECISIONS



**Ethics challenges us to identify our fundamental values.**

*(We already have chosen to articulate those values through a number of shared statements ...)*

**Because of that choice, those values direct our decisions.**

Ethics involves making decisions aligned with those values (a commitment).

**That choice also implies an accepted responsibility.**

How do we implement those shared values in a meaningful manner when we have challenging questions?

# APPLYING ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING TO OUR HEALTH CARE FINANCING DECISIONS

- What is our defined value? (*to be discussed further this morning*)
  - Example: “Right to health” vs “right to access health?”
  - UN/WHO’s definition of health – in context – states that you have the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.
  - Therefore, what is required are **circumstances** that allow conditions of health (such as access to health care) rather than literally promising “health.”
    - These include the underlying determinants of health, such as safe and potable water, sanitation, food, housing, health-related information and education, and gender equality

# APPLYING ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING TO OUR HEALTH CARE FINANCING DECISIONS

- No matter how we define the right to health or to access health care, we **have** identified it as a fundamental human value, which then compels us both:
  - To define the parameters of a **basic moral minimum standard**.
  - To define responsibilities in order to ensure that basic minimum.

# BASIC MORAL MINIMUM STANDARD: ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

## **Basic Moral Minimum Standard** (*proposed*)

- Conditions that enable each individual:
  - to maintain their health
  - to be productive
  - without significant financial hardship ...
  - while at the same time, allowing health care providers and others involved to be adequately compensated

# ETHICAL APPLICATIONS

- Ethics can help us to explore these and other issues more deeply, such as considering whether there are fundamental rights at stake or if the greater good will be served by our decisions (***often both***).
- As an example, in considering coverage and rationing decisions:
  - The Netherlands uses an “**outcomes-based**” approach (greatest good), looking at necessity, effectiveness, efficiency, and individual responsibility to decide which services should be covered.
  - Sweden instead uses a “**rights-based**” approach, looking at individual dignity, needs, solidarity and then only cost effectiveness **subordinate** to the other values.

# HOW DO WE RESOLVE CONFLICTS?

- Aristotle suggests we seek a “golden mean,” a desirable middle between two extremes, one of excess and the other of deficiency.
- As we have discussed, the questions remain the same, while the answers for each jurisdiction will vary based on culture and community.

