PAHO Ethics Review Committee

Ethical oversight of research conducted with PAHO’s involvement

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BIOETHICS: TOWARDS THE INTEGRATION OF ETHICS IN HEALTH

Concept paper
PAHOERC: 2015 data

- 83% increase in number of submissions (vs 2014): 75 proposals from 23 countries
- Proposals from TDR, iPIER program and E. Granda Ugalde program: 50% of submissions
- Different levels of PAHO involvement
- Prominent topics: Infectious / neglected diseases and immunization
- At the intersection between public health research and practice: many exemptions
- PAHOERC: No registry of research
Zika Ethics Consultation:
Ethics Guidance on Key Issues Raised by the Outbreak

Pan American Health Organization
Washington, D.C., April 6-7, 2016
The right(s) approach to Zika

The Zika virus epidemic is spreading: 63 countries are now reporting transmission, over 1500 cases of related microcephaly or CNS malformations have been confirmed this year, and knowledge on the disease is advancing slowly. Adding to the tension around Zika, at the epicentre of the outbreak, Brazil is bracing for a large-scale mass gathering: the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. Conflicting opinions on the need to postpone or cancel the Games have been expressed, but during the 69th World Health Assembly last month, the WHO issued clear public health advice on the matter: the Games will not significantly change the international spread of the virus and travellers can reduce their risk of contracting managing infection in pregnant women. Vector control is emphasised, as well as personal protection such as clothing, bednets, repellents, and safe sex. Again these are sound recommendations, duly relayed by health authorities, but they certainly don’t resonate in the poorest neighbourhoods of Brazil and other affected countries, where the availability, practicality, and affordability of protective items are doubtful and where safe sex is not always negotiable. When prevention fails, women of reproductive age or who are pregnant are faced with terrifying uncertainties, for lack of information, lack of access to basic services and diagnostic tests, and most importantly a blatant lack of choice.
Zika virus: ethics preparedness for old and new challenges

In its July editorial, The Lancet Global Health drew attention to the ethical challenges posed by the Zika virus outbreak. The Regional Program on Bioethics at the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) arranged an ethics consultation, funded by the Wellcome Trust, to provide ethically sound guidance for the outbreak. Ethicists—mostly from the Americas—and other professionals involved in the response analysed the ethical issues that affected countries had identified as most challenging, and developed are still posing challenges, and how to ensure that the same situation does not occur in a future outbreak.

Progress has certainly been made, encouraged by the Region of the America’s 2012 commitment to integrate ethics in health care. The Zika virus outbreak has led to further progress. PAHO’s Zika ethics consultation has strengthened our capacity to do ethics analysis collectively and provide guidance for specific problems. Moreover, ethics is being embedded in other areas—eg, in the support of PAHO’s Latin American Center for Perinatology, Women and Reproductive Health to Ministries of Health to respond to the outbreak.

In the midst of a health emergency,
Thanks

www.paho.org/bioethics

See right tab for publications, resources, and mailing lists: Investigación ÉTICA and Public Health Ethics

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