

Ethics & Religion in Health Care: Unraveling Vaccine Science, Faith, & Public Discourse



Bowyer G. Freeman, MBA, D.Min.
New St. Mark Baptist Church
African American Clergy Medical Research Initiative

W.H.O. defines Health...

- The State of ...
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Social well-being,
- and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity

The 4th Dimension of Health

- The State of ...
 - Physical
 - Mental
 - Social and
 - SPIRITUAL well-being,
- ...and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity

Genomics Nomenclature...

- Has already taken on a decidedly religious tone
- In the 1990s geneticists, describing the genome as the "Bible"...
- ...the "Book of Man"
- ...the "Holy Grail"

Theological & Ethical Reflections of the Human Genome Project

Theological Questions of HGP...

- How does new information about the human genome impact how we think of ourselves as human? And how are the changes in our understanding of our identity different for different theological and philosophical world-views?
- How do religion and genetics interact and can they work together to help us all understand human nature better?

Theological Questions of HGP...

- Will new genetic advances exacerbate existing social disparities?

Theological Questions of HGP...

- How do we make sure that delivery of information, intended impacts & services respect the needs of communities; respecting their varied world views?

HGP Issues

- Gene patenting
- Confidentiality (Privacy) , discrimination, fair use of information
- Germline intervention
- Stem cell research
- Human Cloning

Pastoral Care: Mission

- Provide a broad spectrum of Pastoral Care and Counseling of an ecumenical nature...
- Encourage Pastoral Care and Counseling by the patient's own spiritual advisor if s/he is available ...

Pastoral Care: Philosophy

- Recognize that religious / spiritual values are important resources...
- Provide a spiritual component to total care...
- Essentially religious in nature... but not limited to organized religion

Pastoral Care: Philosophy..

- Shall not infringe on religious beliefs of the patient...
- Integrated with efforts of other professional health care disciplines....

Pastoral Care: Philosophy..

- Integrate with the pastoral care efforts of the patient's own spiritual advisor...
- Respect the patient's rights....

Societal Duty

- Contribution to Society
- Safety of Society
- Trust of society's members

Trust

- Trust
- Trust
- TRUST

TRUST

- Foundational
- Fast
- Fixing

TRUST ECONOMICS

↑ TRUST = ↑ SPEED ↓ COST

- TRUST Dividend
- TRUST Tax

WAVES OF TRUST

SELF
Relationship
Organizational
Market
Societal

Ethical Principals

- **Autonomy** – self-rule that is free from both controlling interference by others and from limitations, such as inadequate understanding, that prevent meaningful choice
- **Nonmaleficence** – asserts an obligation not to inflict harm on others. (*Primum non nocere*)... “Above all, do no harm”

Ethical Principals...

- **Beneficence** – requires that an agent take positive steps to help others, and not merely refrain from harmful acts
- **Justice** – (*distributive*) refers to fair, equitable, and appropriate distribution determined by justified norms that structure the terms of social cooperation

Moral Rules

- Veracity
- Privacy
- Confidentiality
- Fidelity
- ...as they apply to health care professionals or researchers, and their patients or subjects

Moral Rules: Veracity

- Veracity in the health care setting refers to comprehensive, accurate, and objective transmission of information, as well as to the way the professional fosters the patient's or subject's understanding.

Moral Rules: Veracity

- is based on respect owed to others
- has a close connection to the obligations of fidelity and promise keeping
- Professional – patient / subject relationships ultimately depend on trust

Moral Rules: PRIVACY

- a state or condition of limited access
- Note Five forms of privacy that involve limited access to the person.....

Forms of Privacy (five)

- informational privacy
- physical privacy
- decisional privacy
- proprietary privacy
- relational / associational privacy

Moral Rules: Confidentiality

- is a branch of informational privacy– it prevents *redisclosure* of information that was originally disclosed within a confidential relationship
- An infringement of a person's right to confidentiality occurs only if the person (or institution) to whom the information was disclosed in confidence fails to protect the information or deliberately discloses it

When is breach of Confidentiality justifiable?

Moral Rules: Fidelity

- The Professional - Patient relationship is founded on trust and confidence
- (1) the Professional effaces self-interest in any situation that may conflict with the patient's best interest, and
- (2) the Professional favors the patient's interest over other's interest.

“We are in the age of *Homo economicus*... Human genetic material is increasingly an object of commerce.”*



*Knoppers, B. M., Hirtle, M., and K. Cranley Glass,
“Commercialization of Genetic Research and Public Policy,”
Science pgs. 2277-2278, Vol. 286 1999.

