

# Health Technology, Quality, Law, and Ethics

## ABSTRACT

Ethics and law in public health reflect societal values in keeping with social, economic, demographic, epidemiological, and political changes, while facing new health challenges and new technologies. Technology assessment helps in determining health policy and priorities as technological change is rapid and vital for progress. Health ethics needed to be redefined in the light of medical participation in twentieth century genocides in the name of racial purity and the industrialized murder of millions in World War II. The Nuremberg Trials redefined the ethics of health research and bioethics. Public health works to protect the population from illness and premature death, often with restrictions such as banning cigarette advertisements. Failure to act in the protection of public health can be unethical by denying best practices. Quality is promoted by professional standards, accreditation by state authorities for health provider institutions and public health departments, and educational programs for public health.

## SUPPORT MATERIAL

### Student Competencies: Transferable Knowledge and Skills

The following are points of emphasis highlighting key principles that public health graduates are expected to understand and apply in practice. The key points arise from this chapter and other studies in specialized courses, seminars, readings during public health education, and continuing education. The selected skills and knowledge are divided into two parts. The first consists of core questions pertaining to immediate student requirements, while the second refers to competencies essential for successful public health practitioners. These include competencies recommended by the American Public Health Association in 2007, as well as those of the European Association of Schools of Public Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada's 2008 Report on Core Competencies. For more detailed competencies please consult the Association of Schools of Public Health website at: <http://www.asph.org/document.cfm?page=851>

#### Part I: Core Questions

1. What is the responsibility of government in assuring quality of health care?
2. What is the responsibility of government in assuring quality of health products?

3. What is the liability of a manufacturer for the quality of its products?
4. What are the benefits and drawbacks to technological innovation in medicine?
5. Define the concept of appropriate technology.
6. Define the concepts of total quality management and continuous quality improvement.
7. Describe technology assessment in regard to "hi-tech" and "lo-tech" innovations in health care.
8. What are the legal responsibilities of a health provider and of a health system for a patient, member, and beneficiary?
9. What ethical conflicts occur in the following situations:
  - (a) renal transplantation in a 79-year-old diabetic
  - (b) fluoridation of community water to benefit children's teeth
  - (c) financing a CT scan in an area already served by such a machine, while access to basic primary care is weak
  - (d) training more doctors than can be employed in a health system with inadequate standards of basic and clinical training
  - (e) medical treatment for uninsured people?
10. Discuss the interaction of technology assessment, quality improvement, and legal and ethical standards in the New Public Health.

#### Part II: Knowledge and Skills

1. Describe the factors involved in quality assurance and organization of care.
2. Describe ethical issues in public health and in medical research.
3. Describe issues of public health law in national health systems.
4. Discuss an integrated approach to quality assurance, legal aspects, and ethical standards in the organization of care and technology.
5. Apply the principles of total quality management and continuous quality improvement.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of legal considerations in the regulation and responsibilities of health providers and the health system, including patient's rights and health care directives.
7. Describe and discuss the interaction of technological assessment, quality improvement, and legal and ethical standards for a minimum of two community programs (e.g., renal transplantation, community food fortification) in the context of the New Public Health and with regard to population-based resource limitations.

### Topics for Student Review

1. What is the responsibility of government in assuring quality of health care?
2. What is the responsibility of government in assuring quality of health products?
3. What is the liability of a manufacturer for the quality of his products?
4. What are the benefits and drawbacks to technological innovation in medicine?
5. Define the concept of appropriate technology.
6. Define the concepts of Total Quality Management and Continuous Quality Improvement.
7. Describe technology assessment in regard to “hi-tech” and “lo-tech” innovations in health care.
8. What are the legal responsibilities of a health provider and of a health system for a patient, member, and beneficiary?
9. What ethical conflicts occur in the following situation?
  - a. Renal transplantation in a 79-year-old diabetic
  - b. Fluoridation of community water to benefit children’s teeth
  - c. Financing a CT scan in an area already served by such a machine, while access to basic primary care is weak
  - d. Training more doctors than can be employed in a health system with inadequate standards of basic and clinical training
  - e. Medical treatment for uninsured persons
10. Discuss the interaction of technology assessment, quality improvement, legal and ethical standards in the New Public Health.

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