

Public Health Ethics for MC

Glenda Gray

Neil Martinson

Guy de Bruyn

Public Health Ethics

People are responsible to act on the basis of what they know. Knowledge is not morally neutral and often demands action.

- Moreover, information is not to be gathered for idle interest
- Public health should seek to translate available information into timely action

Perennial Tension in Public Health

- The common need in Public Health is to weigh the concerns of both the individual and the community
- These may often be in conflict

Scenario 1

In your country, you have decided to add infant MC to the MC rollout program. A considerable amount of resources has gone into developing this aspect of the program. The program is voluntary. In the first year, less than 5% of infants receive MC. The MOH wants to see higher uptake (>90%) in this component of your program, to justify continuing infant MC.

- What changes would you make, if any?
- What do think about mandatory infant MC?
- What are the benefits of an 'opt-out' approach?

Scenario 2

Your health economic advisor has done the calculations – you can't afford to start both a national MC program AND offer HPV vaccination to adolescent girls. You have to choose one.

- Which would you choose, and how do you justify choosing MC, if that was your choice?
- How would you manage this in the media?

Scenario 3

In a large health district, 50 clinics have the necessary infrastructure and staffing to roll out MC, but the program can only afford to fund activity in 25 clinics. A decision is made to randomly assign clinics to participating in the program.

- In the clinics where MC is not being offered, will you adjust your VCT risk reduction counseling messages to include/exclude information about MC?
- What will you do about men requesting MC at non-assigned clinics?

Scenario 4

You oversee a district where the prevalence of HIV among men is 40%. You have limited resources and staff to implement MC.

- Will you adjust your eligibility criteria for MC excluding men with HIV, given this high prevalence?
- If so, how will you deal with possible community responses and mitigate the stigmatization your decision may cause?
- If you decide not to exclude men with HIV, how will you deal with the potential for diminished programmatic effects?