



Ethical dimensions of linking science and policy through impact assessment

Colin L. Soskolne, PhD

Member, ISEE Ethics and Philosophy Committee

Professor emeritus, University of Alberta, Canada

Adjunct Professor, University of Canberra, Australia

colin.soskolne@ualberta.ca

www.colinsoskolne.com

Ethics and Philosophy Committee

- Established in 1991 (23 years ago); always ready to welcome interested new members
- We deal with the ethical and philosophical underpinnings between environment and health
- We sponsor symposia; develop ethics guidelines; offer recommendations and definitions; provide moral support to victimized colleagues
- We attempt to be proactive about current and future ethical challenges
- We interact continually through e-mail communications, newsletter updates, conference calls, and during the annual ISEE conferences
- **Are you aware of the ISEE Ethics Guidelines for Environmental Epidemiologists - Revised April, 2012? Have you read them?**

(Kramer S, Soskolne CL, Mustapha BA, Al-Delaimy WK, 2012 Revised Ethics Guidelines for Environmental Epidemiologists. *Environ Health Perspect* 120(8): doi:10.1289/ehp.1205562 and <http://www.iseepi.org/About/ethics.htm>)

The aims of this discussion

- To facilitate dialogue about the ethical dimensions relevant to the topic and presentations heard in this session in the following areas:
 - hypothesis formulation
 - methods
 - interpretation
 - recruitment
 - conduct
 - dissemination of work
 - design
 - analysis
 - data archival and sharing
- To raise awareness and promote greater ethical transparency and accountability.
- Our purpose is **NOT** to seek retribution or to point fingers at the studies that have been presented today, but rather to learn from them to improve ethical standards in future studies in different social and geographical contexts.

Ethics - Principles

From Bioethics

- **Respect for autonomy:** respecting the right of participants to self-determine the extent of their participation
- **Beneficence:** doing good through our research
- **Non-maleficence:** doing no harm
- **Social/Distributive Justice/ Fairness:** who is deriving benefits and who is taking risks?

From Public Health and Environmental Epidemiology

- Protect the Most Vulnerable
- The Precautionary Principle
- Environmental Justice
- Scientific Integrity
- Protect the Public Interest Over Any Other Interests
- Others ...

Questions emerging from this session

- **Classical HIA comprises 5 linear steps:**
 - Hazard assessment (is there evidence of a pollutant?)
 - Vulnerability assessment (are people exposed?)
 - Health risk assessment (an epi study that quantifies any risk?)
 - Risk management (how best to address any risk?)
 - Risk communication (how best to engage stakeholders?)
- **Each step has ethical dimensions. Today's papers focus on indicators to inform policy. Emergent questions:**
 - Should we engage with the community before conducting an HIA?
 - Of the indicators we select, is there the potential for bias in design or interpretation?
 - Are all biomarkers clinically meaningful?
 - Whose interests are we serving in conducting any HIA?
 - Are there consequences for the community (culture, economic, etc?)
 - Are we prepared to deal with people's anxiety levels?

ISEE Ethics and Philosophy Committee - Contact Information

- http://www.iseepi.org/About/ethics_cmte.htm

Wael Al-Delaimy MD, PhD

Chair, ISEE Ethics and Philosophy Committee

Professor of Epidemiology

University of California, San Diego

Email: waldelaimy@ucsd.edu

- **New members are welcome!**

All enquiries about ethics should be sent to any one of:

Wael Al-Delaimy: waldelaimy@ucsd.edu

Colin Soskolne: colin.soskolne@ualberta.ca

Adetoun Mustapha: adetoun.mustapha03@alumni.imperial.ac.uk

Martin Tondel: martin.tondel@medsci.uu.se

ISEE Ethics Guidelines for Environmental Epidemiologists - Revised April 2012

Visit:
http://www.iseepi.org/About/Docs/ethics_guidelines_adopted_april_25_2012.pdf

