

對〈公共健康倫理學：
一種藝術的現狀〉一文的評論

Essay Review:

“Public Health Ethics:
The State of Art”

by Kathryn L. MacKay

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摘要

這篇文章是公共健康倫理的入門讀物。結構清晰，易於理解。文章明確闡述了公共健康倫理的範圍以及與生物倫理的區別。作者將公共健康倫理放在更廣泛的生物倫理背景中去介紹，對照中

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強調了公共健康倫理的研究範式和方法。這種寫作方式有助於熟悉生物倫理的讀者理解公共健康所面臨的特殊倫理挑戰。文章巧妙地將理論與實際案例相結合，提高了讀者應對複雜倫理情境的能力，並鼓勵讀者對各種倫理立場進行深入思考。

In this essay, the main point is that public health ethics focuses on moral questions that affect large groups of people, which sets it apart from broader bioethical issues. The author argues that while bioethics often focuses on individual patient rights and clinical decision-making, public health ethics is concerned with societal-level issues such as poverty, disease prevention, and health equity. The author offers several key aspects of public health ethics with detailed insights. One key focus is the shift from individual cases to collective outcomes, which necessitates a unique ethical framework that considers the impact of policies and interventions on entire communities rather than on individual patients. This approach raises important questions about the moral implications of prioritizing population health over individual autonomy. Additionally, the author emphasizes the importance of social determinants of health, such as socioeconomic status, education, and environment, in shaping health outcomes. This perspective underscores the need for ethical considerations that address systemic inequalities and support policies aimed at improving health equity. Furthermore, the author discusses the ethical justifications for public health interventions, like vaccination programs and health education campaigns, which often require balancing individual rights against community benefits. This exploration includes a critical examination of the ethical obligations and moral legitimacy of forceful measures of public health authorities to protect the health of the general public. The author also touches on the global dimensions of public health ethics, such as how issues like pandemics and health disparities transcend national borders. This perspective encourages a global ethical framework that considers the responsibilities of wealthier nations toward poorer countries and the ethical implications of global health policies. The author argues for the development of specific ethical frameworks tailored to public health challenges, such as utilitarianism, which focuses on maximizing overall good, and principles of justice that emphasize fair distribution of healthcare resources.

In this essay, MacKay emphasizes the multi-disciplinary nature of public health and the significant political dimensions that influence public health policy decisions and interventions. She argues that effective public health practice requires collaboration across various disciplines, including epidemiology, sociology, economics, and law.

This helps build a full understanding of health issues and create better solutions. MacKay's arguments serve as a complement to Dew, Scott, and Kirkman (2016) and Holland (2022)'s efforts to provide structure and focus for understanding the experience of health and the delivery of health services in a broader social context. It's worth noting that MacKay highlights how political factors shape public health policies. She emphasizes that decisions are often influenced by power dynamics, funding priorities, and political agendas. This recognition of the political landscape is crucial for understanding the development and implementation of public health initiatives. It also facilitates dialogue between health scholars and public policy scholars by exploring how politics affect healthcare priority setting (Smith et al. 2014). From her perspective, she stresses the importance of advocacy, asserting that public health professionals have a responsibility to engage in advocacy efforts to influence policy and address systemic barriers to health. MacKay also discusses the ethical implications of political decisions on public health outcomes, emphasizing that policies shaped by political considerations can either enhance or undermine health equity. Finally, she underscores the importance of community engagement in public health decision-making, asserting that incorporating community voices leads to initiatives that are more responsive to the needs of the populations they serve, ultimately resulting in better health outcomes.

To bolster her main points, MacKay effectively uses contemporary examples, such as the ethical challenges posed by COVID-19, antimicrobial resistance, and lifestyle diseases, to illustrate her arguments about public health ethics. She discusses the dilemmas that arose during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly regarding the allocation of limited resources like vaccines and the balance between individual rights and public safety, highlighting how political considerations and societal values influenced these decisions and raised questions about equity in healthcare access. Regarding antimicrobial resistance, MacKay emphasizes the ethical responsibility of public health professionals to promote responsible prescribing practices and public awareness, noting the global cooperation required to tackle this issue while ensuring access to effective treatments. In examining lifestyle diseases, she points out the ethical considerations surrounding personal responsibility versus societal influences, advocating for policies that address social determinants of health rather than placing the burden solely on individuals. Throughout these examples, MacKay underscores the importance of health equity and social justice, illustrating how contemporary issues disproportionately affect marginalized populations and reinforcing the need for ethical frameworks that prioritize equitable health outcomes.

The essay presents valuable insights into public health ethics, though it does have some limitations. The author acknowledges that due to length constraints, a comprehensive exploration of all aspects of public health ethics is challenging. As a result, certain topics that merit deeper discussion may only receive brief attention. One area where the essay could expand is its relatively focused examination of specific contemporary issues, which might benefit from a more thorough consideration of historical contexts and foundational theories in public health ethics. The author draws on her personal experiences primarily from Canada, the UK, and Australia, which, while enriching, may also limit the breadth of perspectives included. Focusing primarily on English-language ethics literature may limit the diversity of perspectives, especially about the experiences of developing countries in health management. For example, in China, ethical issues in health are increasingly intertwined with political and technological advancements. This is evident in the promotion of medical and health data sharing in China, where substantial ethical and political barriers hinder the free flow of data across research teams and international borders, impeding its conversion into big data. The primary health challenges identified in the era of big data in China include the need for capacity building, balancing the interests of various stakeholders, ensuring the scientific and social value of data sharing, and protecting data subjects' rights, public trust, and engagement (Li and Cong 2021). Additionally, in more cutting-edge areas like gene editing, it is crucial to navigate the ethical complexities that arise. Cross-national research on public health ethics should clearly distinguish between universal basic human rights and culturally specific non-basic rights: a distinction often neglected in international declarations. This differentiation is vital as it explores how different cultural frameworks, categorized as Type-A (liberal) and Type-B (Confucian), perceive rights related to genetic enhancement that are not universally acknowledged. This approach not only enriches the discourse around gene editing but also ensures that ethical considerations are both globally informed and locally relevant (Fan 2024). Additionally, there appears to be room for a more in-depth analysis of certain topics. For instance, when discussing antimicrobial resistance, a closer examination of the social, economic, and cultural factors—such as resource distribution and public education—could enhance the overall discussion. While MacKay references existing literature, a deeper engagement with foundational texts and longstanding debates in the field might provide a more robust theoretical framework for her arguments. Additionally, as an introductory article, some complex ethical issues may be addressed at a surface level, lacking a detailed exploration of the conflicts between various positions and the intricate

moral and political dimensions involved. But MacKay encourages readers to consult the cited papers for a more comprehensive understanding of the themes discussed, indicating that the paper may not fully encompass the depth of each ethical issue on its own. These aspects present opportunities for future research and exploration, which could further enrich the discourse in public health ethics.

In summary, this essay makes several significant contributions to the topic of public health ethics. First, it offers a comprehensive definition of public health ethics and elucidates its relationship with bioethics. This clarity is essential, as it delineates the boundaries of each field while simultaneously highlighting their interconnections. In doing so, the work establishes a theoretical framework that can inform future research and discussions in both domains. Second, the essay adopts a multidisciplinary perspective, integrating insights from diverse fields such as philosophy, sociology, law, and medicine. This approach not only enriches the ethical analysis of public health issues but also acknowledges the complexity of health-related challenges that necessitate a variety of viewpoints. For instance, it examines how social determinants of health influence ethical considerations, underscoring the notion that ethical decisions in public health must be contextualized within broader societal frameworks. The paper further engages with contemporary issues, particularly those arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. It scrutinizes ethical dilemmas related to vaccine distribution, public health mandates, and the tension between individual rights and community safety. By analysing these urgent issues, the paper underscores the relevance of public health ethics in real-world scenarios, thereby fostering ongoing dialogue regarding ethical practices in times of crisis. Moreover, the article explores the concept of social justice within the realm of public health, emphasizing the imperative of health equity and the moral obligation to address disparities affecting marginalized populations. The discussions surrounding social justice are particularly timely, as they resonate with broader movements advocating for health equity and the rights of disadvantaged communities. Additionally, the essay effectively connects theoretical insights to practical applications by examining how ethical principles can inform public health policies. It discusses case studies where ethical considerations have influenced policy decisions, illustrating the practical implications of ethical theories in real-world contexts. This connection between theory and practice is essential for ensuring that public health initiatives are not only effective but also ethically sound.

In terms of future directions, the paper proposes innovative approaches to public health ethics: the incorporation of virtue ethics and decolonization perspectives. This essay encourages scholars to

reconsider ethical principles in light of historical injustices and cultural contexts. Such a forward-thinking approach is crucial for the evolution of public health practices that are responsive to the needs of diverse.

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