

A Responder's Guide to Ethics in Disaster: One of Many Hats

[or]
How to Not Mistake Your Spouse, Yourself, Your Patient, or Anyone Else for a Hat
(with apologies to Oliver Sacks)

Lawrence Hipshman, MD MPH
Oregon Disaster Medical Assistance Team (OR2)
Oregon Health & Sciences University
NW Kaiser Permanente, The Brookside Center
Portland, Oregon 503 571 0898
Lawrence.X.Hipshman@kp.org

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Isn't this ethical decision making thing just a waste of time?

I have a disaster to respond to!

Without ethical thinking in our decision making (p2p, public health, local, state, national planning and action): strong risk of making the after effects of disaster worse for everyone.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

- Principle of healthcare ethics help think, not decide issues.
- In extreme situations, other imperatives complicate usual health care ethics.
- Ethics are important in training, planning, research, relief funding and policy decision making not just "care giving."
- Healthcare ethics are not just for providers.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

WHAT'S WITH THE "HATS" THING

Wear different hats:

family
community
self
organizations
larger society

Disaster response: not just doing health care

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

WE ALL WEAR MANY HATS BUT EACH PERSON, COMMUNITY MUST NOT BE MISTAKEN FOR BEING A HAT.

Our (helper) tendency: Objectify and logical
Makes things more efficient and contains our possibly debilitating emotional / behavioral responses to disaster efforts.
Objectifying people, communities is a poor way to achieve a laudable goal.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Decision making under disaster distress is not for sissies:

More intense perceived or real time pressure.
Possible political pressures.
High- or low-blood sugar levels / caffeine.
Sleep deprivation.
Lack of / conflicting information; uncertainty.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Distressed decision makers (dms) may:

- Experience conflict with other dms.
- Perceive selectively ?sensory overload; miss important information.
- Experience perception distortion
- Intolerant of ambiguity: make premature decisions.
- Decreased ability to handle difficult tasks

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Distressed decision makers (dms) may:

- Greater tendency for aggression/escape behaviors.
- Focus on immediate survival goals, sacrificing long-range considerations.
- Choose a risky alternative.
- Get tunnel vision.
- Succumb to "groupthink" (NOT consensus)

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Ethical decision making in general health care system:

- individual focus (mostly)
- individual choice (mostly)
- person has right to do / not do (mostly)
- do good for the person (+/- without doing bad for others)
- usually time to decide / consult

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Ethics decisions in disaster response:

- public health focus (mostly)
- population based choices (mostly)
- person has less right to do/not do
- do good for population: may not be good for individual
- do it now; little consultation

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

The real problem you all face is:

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

**THE
ETHICAL
DILEMMA**

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Dilemma:

has two (could be more) horns, i.e., conflicting values leading to different conclusions (actions)

rational, moral, ethical, helpful people will disagree

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Ethical Thinking Approaches:

utilitarian: "best outcome" is the one that provides the most good for the most people (end justifies the means)

deontological: "best outcome" is the one that arises from applying the best ethics principles

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

The problem with Utilitarianism:

Watchmen (the movie): pure utilitarianism

Dilemma: world peace is great goal, but at any cost?

Do the ends justify the means?

Every ethical principle was violated in the process to get to the (laudable) goal

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics
Pandemic Influenza Working Group
November 2005

Five Procedural (deontological) Values To Guide Ethical Decision Making in Disaster Planning and Response

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Five procedural values

"Assure the decision making process is"

- Reasonable
- Open and transparent
- Inclusive
- Responsive
- Accountable

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics
Pandemic Influenza Working Group
November 2005

Ten Substantive Values to guide ethical decision making in disaster planning and response

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical
decision-making

INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical
decision-making

**PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC
FROM HARM**

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical
decision-making

PROPORTIONALITY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical
decision-making:

PRIVACY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical
decision-making

DUTY TO PROVIDE CARE

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical
decision-making

STEWARDSHIP

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

SOLIDARITY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

EQUITY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

TRUST

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

RECIPROCITY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

The single most and always-important Substantive Value to guide ethical decision-making in disaster efforts is:

TRUST

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Objective: 1

Describe ethical issue that arise when having to balance one's multiple responsibilities with one's ability to respond to those in need.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Objective 2:

Identify treatment strategy(ies) for various patients needing emergency pain medications given limited resources

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Objective 3:

Discuss the "risk v benefit" analysis as applied to people returning home after a public health crisis.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Objective 4:

Discuss issues related to using local versus national standards in law, public opinion and ethics as applied to disaster response.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Four major ethical issues are:

1. health workers' duty to provide care
2. priority setting, including the allocation of scarce resources such as pain medicine
3. restricting liberty in the interest of public health
4. whose / which ethical standards to use (local, national, international, religious...)

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Ethical issue one:

Health Workers'
Duty To Provide Care

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

DUTY TO PROVIDE CARE

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

RECIPROCITY

•

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Ethical issue two:

Priority Setting, Including The Allocation Of Scarce Resources Such As Pain Medicine

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Rule of Rescue

Why search for one desperately lost sailor?

Why do we offer critically ill patients intensive care, when prognosis is virtually zero?

Why do some patients receive a second or third heart or liver transplant, when first-time recipients have a higher 1-year survival rate?

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Rule of rescue

A (Western world) psychological imperative (??)

- Critical to the disaster relief effort
- A social / ethical/ political imperative
- Damn the expense !!
- Damn the alternative uses of resources !!
- Damn the risk to the rescuers !!
- Hero

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

EQUITY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

STEWARDSHIP

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Siracues (Italy) 30 April to 4 May 1984.

Parens Patria (1610, the King as parent)

Governments can limit international human rights/laws based on public health and/or public safety concerns.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

The limitation must be deemed "necessary" which implies it:

- (a) Is based on a recognized ground as assessed by objective means.
- (b) Responds to a pressing public or social need.
- (c) Pursues a legitimate aim (as defined in the principles / international human rights)
- (d) Is proportionate to that aim.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Ethical issue three:

Restricting Liberty In The Interest
Of Public Health

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC FROM HARM

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

PROPORTIONALITY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

STEWARDSHIP

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Ethical issue four:

Whose / Which Ethical Standards To Use (Local, National, International, Religious...)

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

STEWARDSHIP

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive values to guide ethical decision-making

SOLIDARITY

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Plans need to be founded on widely held ethical values:

- not just local, personal, cultural, religious
- people need to understand in advance the kinds of choices that will have to be made
- decision makers and public need to discuss ethical choices
- plans reflect what most people will accept as fair, and good for public health.

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Strategies to improve ethics in disaster decision making

BE PREPARED

assure you have all your responsibilities secured

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Strategies to improve ethics in disaster decision making

All persons in disasters work need to have ethics competence (not just awareness): planners, funders, responders, the general public

We need National level on-going dialogue(s) on ethical decision making so we can form a national (?international) consensus on the process and potential / preferred ways to meet the dilemmas in ethical decision making in disasters

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

EXERCISES

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

You have children or an ill parent at home. You are called to deploy. You are the only team member with a certain skill set.

Substantive Values involved?
What do you do?

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Substantive Values

Trust	Stewardship
Reciprocity	Solidarity
Equity	Individual liberty
Duty to provide care	Proportionality
Protect public from harm	Privacy

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

You have been working 36 hours straight. You feel tired, hungry, angry. Others are still working and seem OK.

Do you continue or give it a rest?
Substantive Values involved?

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

You are the only care giver for several people in hospital. You are called to respond to a disaster. Is your allegiance / attention to stay with "your patients" or do you transfer your efforts to the response effort?

Substantive Values involved?

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

The patient surge, with acute and expectant individuals, swamps the available pain meds cache. Both groups have many people with very significant pain.

Substantive Values involved?

Who gets what?

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

Your Incident Commander has not had any training in ethical decision making. She decides that you are to leave your patients at post A and report to post B to assist with care for some important local government officials.

Substantive Values involved?

What do you do?

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

You have responded to a disaster in a Native community. Your patient wants to talk with a traditional healer but you think action is necessary now.

Substantive Values involved?

What do you do?

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

People who refused to evacuate now sit on the roofs of their houses surrounded by flood waters. Resources rescue them are also needed to bring supplies and personnel to the designated staging area to care for the people who did evacuate. What should be the public health response?

Substantive Values involved?

Responder's Guide: Disaster Ethics

People build their homes in a flood plain and do not have insurance (can't afford it).

There is a flood. Homes are destroyed or rendered uninhabitable.

What should be done to help?

Substantive Values involved?