The Surveyor's Dilemma
And other articles in the August Issue of the WHO Bulletin

GENEVA – Health surveillance, conducted over many years in selected populations mainly in Africa and Asia, is essential for gathering reliable health information. But one of the many ethical dilemmas posed by health surveillance is the need to obtain accurate health data while protecting the dignity of participants and their right to choose whether to be involved. This is one of the articles in the August issue of the Bulletin of the World Health Organization and month's theme is on ethics and public health.

“Serious questions are raised by surveillance that are not necessarily considered under standard ethical review,” says researcher Margaret Carrel, from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, United States of America. “How do we alleviate tension among community members, and even family members, who don’t agree about participation? Is it ethical for a male head of household to consent for his entire family? Does the consent of a grandfather extend to his grandchildren even if they were not alive when the study began?”

In the Bulletin article, Carrel and co-author, Stuart Rennie, call for a new organization to advise and regulate the ethical aspects of population-based surveillance. Read the article here: http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/8/08-051037/en/index.html

Other key articles from this month’s special theme issue on ethics and public health can be found at: http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/8/en/index.html

- Do drug donations in emergency relief situations do more harm than good? What other solutions are better at supporting relief aid?
- India set to grab US $1 billion worth of clinical trials business by 2010. Who is looking after patient safety and transparency?
• Accommodating religion and science: how new laws dealing with modern bioethical issues were enacted in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
• Call for collaboration among international researchers on traditional and herbal medicine.
• Evidence is growing on the cost-effectiveness of surgery in tackling the global burden of disease.
• An interview with Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and ex-United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

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