

Public Health Ethics and the Science of Social Justice

The *Journal of Public Health* has recently published a special issue on “Public Health Ethics and the Science of Social Justice”, edited by two members of the Faculty’s Ethics Committee. The issue, which was collated prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, explains and contextualises what it means to understand ethics for, in, and of public health. The special issue’s broad approach reminds us of the importance of public health considerations within and beyond questions concerning contagious disease, and promotes understanding of how ethical deliberations feature in public health policy and practice.

The issue, which contains contributions from international leaders in public health, ethics, and law is available free on-line on the [special collection page](#) of the Journal:

<https://academic.oup.com/jpubhealth/pages/public-health-ethics-and-the-science-of-social-justice>

The relevance of the questions that the special issue examines, both to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency, and more widely, are highlighted in the words of the final paragraph of the Editorial:

“We hope that readers already agree that ethics is integral to the aims of public health and to the methods of governance required to organize efforts across society to achieve better outcomes and greater equity in health. Ethico-legal debates are essential to understanding how we should understand those aims and coordinate responses to questions as varied as, for example, antimicrobial resistance, climate change, health-harming built, commercial and social environments, pandemic planning or vaccine hesitancy. Of necessity, we need to consider these as global as well as national challenges, requiring public health discourses that can account for our transnational interconnectedness, impacts and influence. And our understanding must be founded on a recognition that the ethics of public and global health challenges is not a matter just of theoretical debate within the confines of academic dialogue, nor even just a question for the public health community. Critical debates on public health mirror exactly the age-old debates on the authority of government, political morality, social justice and the responsibilities of everyone in a shared community. This is so because, in the end, they all speak to one and the same thing: what we owe one another.”

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