



Ethical and Philosophical Dimensions of Applying Biomarkers to Pregnant Women

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ISEE Ethics and Philosophy Committee

- Established in 1991 (23 years ago); always ready to receive interested new members
- We address ethical and philosophical underpinnings at the nexus of environment and health
- We sponsor symposia; maintain and develop new ethics guidelines; offer recommendations and definitions; provide moral support to victimized colleagues
- We strive 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 ...

Background

In not every case of exposure do we know the clinical/health implications for the newborn, raising questions about the state of science and of undue alarm to pregnant women.

Questions

- Is there a distinction to be made between voluntary and involuntary exposures?
- What are our obligations to the woman, the fetus, and to the new-born child when considering pre-natal testing?
- Are developmental windows known?
- When are we confident that a biomarker is both valid and reliable?
- When is risk communication appropriate, and what form should it take?

ISEE Ethics and Philosophy Committee - Contact Information

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

Wael Al-Delaimy MD, PhD

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- **New members are welcome!**

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ISEE Ethics Guidelines for Environmental Epidemiologists - Revised April 2012

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

