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Public Health Research Ethics

Wendy Rogers
Flinders University



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Session outline

- ▶ Identify challenges in PH research
- ▶ Look at match between PH ethics and research ethics
- ▶ Offer account of PH research ethics
- ▶ Discuss in relation to the *National Statement*
- ▶ Questions and discussion



Challenges in public health research ethics

- Potential for harms (and benefits) to affect many people
- Overlap between research and practice
- Complexity of interventions
- Multi-disciplinary research staff
- Complexity of privacy regulations
- Low levels of funding for public health research and practice



Traditional research ethics

- ▶ Relationships between individuals
- ▶ Medical context: treatment and experiments
- ▶ Potentially very harmful

- ▶ Respect for autonomy
- ▶ Informed consent
- ▶ Balancing benefits and burdens





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Ethical public health research

- ▶ Address inequities
- ▶ Provide fair shares of benefits
- ▶ Have just processes
- ▶ Be effective: use appropriate methods
- ▶ Engage politically





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Address inequities

- ▶ What will the impact of this research be upon health inequities?



Distributive justices: fair shares

- ▶ Who is likely to benefit from this research, and who is likely to be harmed?
- ▶ What would a fair distribution of the benefits look like?
- ▶ Are there any groups who are particularly vulnerable to harms, and if so, how should we treat them?



Procedural justice

- ▶ Developing and exercising capacities and expressing experiences
- ▶ Participation in determining actions and the conditions of actions

- ▶ How has this research question been developed?
- ▶ Whose experiences and voices played a part in the process?
- ▶ Who has a role in making decisions about the kinds of interventions under investigation and what power will they have in using the results?



Rich empiricism: appropriate methods

- ▶ What methods will best allow me to understand what this interventions means for local communities?
- ▶ How does the big picture data relate to this group, and how can I find out what kinds of solutions will be acceptable and effective here?





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Political solutions for political problems



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The virtuous researcher

- ▶ Honesty
 - Building trust
 - Countering paternalism
 - Exposing risks
- ▶ Courage
 - Physical
 - Political





Ethical public health research

- ▶ Address inequities
- ▶ Have just processes: participants exercising capacities and determining actions
- ▶ Provide fair shares of benefits
- ▶ Be effective: use multiple methods (rich empiricism)
- ▶ Engage politically
- ▶ Be honest and courageous





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The National Statement

- ▶ Research merit and integrity
- ▶ Justice
- ▶ Beneficence
- ▶ Respect for autonomy



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Research merit and integrity

- ▶ Clarity about skills and training
- ▶ Appropriate methods used competently





Justice

Fairness in relation to:

- ▶ Inclusion and exclusion of participants
- ▶ Avoiding discrimination and unfair burdens
- ▶ Sharing the benefits fairly



Beneficence

- ▶ The likely benefit of the research must justify any risks of harm or discomfort to the participants
- ▶ “The likely benefit may be to the participants, to the wider community, or both”.



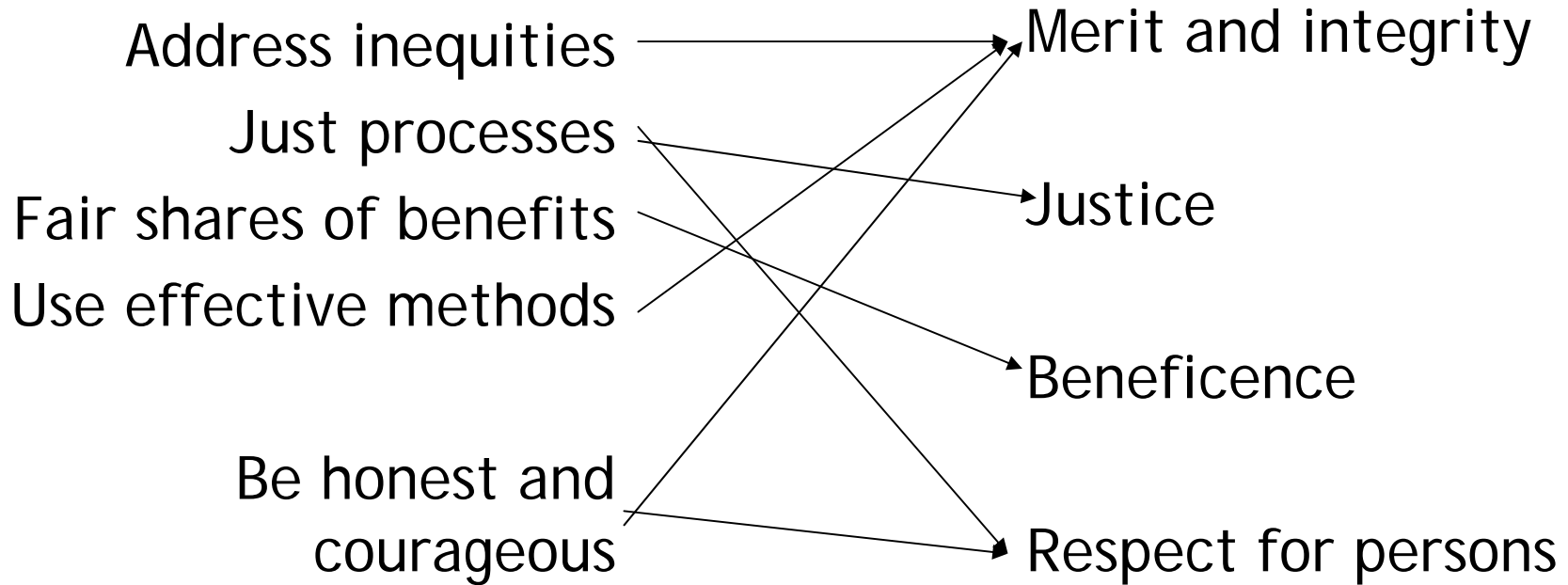


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Respect for persons

- ▶ Consent
- ▶ Confidentiality





Engage politically





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Questions and discussion



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