EPIDEMIC ETHICS

Using 'unproven' clinical interventions during public health emergencies: Ethical considerations

11 April 2022, 1.00-2.00PM (London time)

Epidemics and pandemics of novel pathogens are often characterized by a lack of known therapeutic or preventive interventions. It is therefore imperative to rapidly conduct research to study and develop countermeasures in these contexts. Yet, with research underway and no 'proven' therapeutic or preventive interventions, a question exists as to whether individuals, groups, or populations should be offered 'unproven' preventive and/or therapeutic interventions outside of clinical trials, including “off-label” interventions. This seminar will explore the use of 'unproven' clinical interventions during public health emergencies, coinciding with the recent publication of the World Health Organization's guidance document, "Emergency use of unproven clinical interventions outside clinical trials: ethical considerations".

Chair:

- Prof. Ross Upshur, Head, Division of Clinical Public Health, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, Canada

Panel:

- Dr Alison Bateman-House, Assistant Professor, Division of Medical Ethics Department of Population Health, NYU Grossman School of Medicine, New York, USA
- Dr Ignacio Mastroleo, National Scientific Council (CONICET) & Program of Bioethics of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO), Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Dr Marta Lado Castro-Rial, Case Management Expert, WRE, World Health Organization, Switzerland

The following questions will form the basis of the seminar’s panel discussion. Seminar attendees are invited to submit questions in advance of the seminar when they register or during the live discussion.

1. Is it ethically permissible to use unproven interventions outside clinical trials during a public health emergency?
2. What are the challenges that relevant regulatory bodies and research ethics committees should consider when evaluating emergency use of unproven interventions outside clinical trials?
3. What considerations should guide the evaluation of using unproven clinical interventions outside clinical trials?