

WORKSHOP 8: FIRST DO NO HARM: TEACHING ETHICS IN GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING PROGRAMS

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BACKGROUND: With its proclamation that “there is no health without mental health,” the global mental health (GMH) movement has been defined by a mission to bring quality mental health services to low-resource populations throughout the world. As the discipline has matured, however, it has increasingly recognized that this altruistic mission must be balanced with awareness that altruistic intentions can be at risk for doing inadvertent harm.

AIMS: Legacies of colonialism and asymmetries in resources and power, inherent to institutional, investigator, and training collaborations, can lead to unintended adverse consequences that potentially undermine effectiveness of GMH programs. Trainees need to learn how to anticipate, detect, and mitigate unintended adverse consequences of GMH programs. Trainees need mentoring in pragmatic, field-tested ethical reasoning to prevent trainees' moral distress from progressing into demoralization and cynicism when aspirations must be compromised due to limited resources or opportunities to effect change.

METHODS: The GMH movement has propelled fresh ethical reasoning beyond the familiar scope of institutional review boards vetting of research proposals.

RESULTS: There is a need for ethics training in GMH training programs to encompass three key domains: (1) Ethics of alterity to guide building of respectful and trustworthy relationships so that design and implementation of research studies can proceed collaboratively; (2) Procedural ethics that apply ethical principles of beneficence, autonomy, justice, and cultural validity to the design and implementation of research studies; (3) Pragmatics for managing programs when paucity of resources, cultural barriers, dysfunctional bureaucracies, political corruption, and other healthcare inequities compel ethical trade-offs and forced moral choices. **DISCUSSION:** We will illustrate adverse unintended consequences that have occurred with GMH projects, together with exemplary GMH training programs that show how training and implementation of

ethics of alterity, procedural ethics, and pragmatics of ethical reasoning can be conducted with GMH projects in low resource settings.

Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. Participants will be able to anticipate, detect, and mitigate adverse unintended consequences when presented case studies of GMH programs.
2. Participants will be able to devise strategies for helping trainees manage moral distress from forced choices and ethical dilemmas in case studies of GMH programs.

References

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