

Ethical theories

- in health priorities

Kjell Arne Johansson (MD, PhD)

Professor i medisinsk etikk (UiB) og overlege (AFR Helse-Bergen)



B·CEPS



UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

Gut feeling
(moral intuitions)

vs.

Ethical principles
(rational decision making)



The principle of equality

Equals should be treated equally, and unequals unequally in proportion to their relevant differences.

Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics"



Image: Saara Halmetoja

Clinical Ethical Principles

- Autonomy
- Beneficence
- Do no harm
- Fairness/Justice



VS.

Population based Ethical Principles

- Maximize health
- Priority to worst off
- Financial risk protection



Deliberative democracy - fair priorities without consensus

Can we agree?

We can agree on principles of fair process
(Accountability for Reasonableness)

Substance: Values – Principles – Criteria

As many healthy years as possible,
fairly distributed, with financial protection

Transparency

Relevant reasons

Involved parties

Institutions

Ethical theories relevant for health priorities

Ethical theory	Applied principles	Quantitative tools
Utilitarianism	Maximizing health	Cost-benefit analyses (cost per QALY/DALY)
Egalitarianism	Equality in health	Inequality estimates
Prioritarianism	Health maximization with extra priority for the most deprived	Social welfare functions
Sufficientarianism	Make sure everyone has sufficient health (are above a threshold)	
Rights-based approach	Progressive realization of the right to health and health care	

Legal regulations of health services in Norway

Health Service Laws (Organizational Legislation)

- The Health and Care Services Act (municipality)
- The Specialist Health Services Act

Patient and user rights

Duties of Healthcare Personnel

Special legislation, e.g. mental health care act