

COVID-19 WEBINAR SERIES



Policy Research @ HKIAPS | Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

BIOETHICAL ISSUES ARISING FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC PROGRAMME

28 August 2020, 11:00 AM–12:15 PM (GMT+8)

11:00–11:10 AM
Welcoming Remark

Prof. Fanny M. CHEUNG

*Senior Advisor,
Faculty of Social Science;
Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, CUHK*



11:10–11:30 AM
Prioritizing Frontline
Workers during the
COVID-19 Pandemic

Prof. Nancy S. JECKER

*Professor of Bioethics & Humanities,
University of Washington Medical School, United States
Visiting Professor, CUHK Centre for Bioethics (from 1.9.2020)*



In this presentation, the author argues that during pandemic emergencies after standard triage criteria are applied, frontline workers with workplace exposure to infected patients should be accorded first priority in the allocation of scarce medical resources. This group would include not only physicians and nurses, but also respiratory therapists and any other healthcare workers who are required to enter a room while an infected patient is present. The next priority should be given to essential non-medical personnel. The arguments in support of these claims appeal to narrow social utility, social contract, reciprocity, and respect for persons.

11:30–11:45 AM
Using a Public Health
Ethics Framework to
Unpick Discrimination in
COVID-19 Responses

Prof. Roger Y. CHUNG

*Associate Director, Institute of Health Equity;
Assistant Professor,
JC School of Public Health and Primary Care, CUHK*



In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, various laws, policies, and measures relating to public health have been implemented with the primary purpose of protecting the health of the public; these are widely understood as being the main utilitarian goals of public health. A public health ethical framework is applied to help determine whether the utilitarian objective of promoting public health warrants overriding non-utilitarian values, such as liberty and autonomy, privacy and confidentiality, transparency and trust, and justice and fairness.

11:45 AM–12:00 noon
Reopening Economies
during the COVID-19
Pandemic: Reasoning
about Value Tradeoffs

Prof. Hon-Lam LI

*Professor, Department of Philosophy, CUHK;
Deputy Director, CUHK Centre for Bioethics*



As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are faced with various ethical issues, such as the policy of herd immunity, the issue of reopening economies, and whether the wearing of masks should be made mandatory. Any plausible solution to these issues would involve a tradeoff of values. This presentation brings the ethical theory of contractualism to bear on these issues, while the majority rule and the theory of utilitarianism are also discussed.

12:00 noon–12:15 PM

Q&A Session