

# How to approach ethical issues in PPD: introduction to ethical tools

Workshop in Malta: How to Approach Ethical Issues in PPD

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March 9, 2020

# Who are we?

## Susanne

- PhD. in Philosophy
- Specialises in applied ethics and research ethics
- Head of UNESCO Chair in Bioethics, unit Finland
- Member of National Board of Medical Research Ethics TUKIJA
- Member of Turku University Ethical Review Health Care Division (non-medical)

## Anna

- PhD in Nursing Science
- Research topics: family centered perinatal and neonatal care, IT-solutions supporting patient engagement
- Expertise in clinical research in low-, middle- and high-income contexts and implementation science



## The content of the presentation

- What is research ethics and why to do it?
- Different kinds of ethical dilemmas
- Ethical tools: methodological approaches and useful ethical principles
- Task for practising research ethics with the means provided here



## Is research ethics something separate from research?

- What are the ends of research in PPD?
  - Scientific knowledge
  - personal merit as a researcher
  - career development
  - financial gain
  - pharmacological development
  - treatment efficiency
  - patient wellbeing
  - improvement of public health
  - etc.



## Do the end (goal) of PPD Research justify the means?

- The ends of conducting research in PPD:
  - Scientific knowledge, personal merit as a researcher, career development, financial gain, pharmacological development, treatment efficiency, patient wellbeing, improvement of public health, etc.
- What are the acceptable risks and harms the researcher may take? Whose interests should be taken into account and why?



## What is research ethics?

- Ways to do research ethics
  - The minimum
  - Ethical excellence



## Why is it important to know and do research ethics?

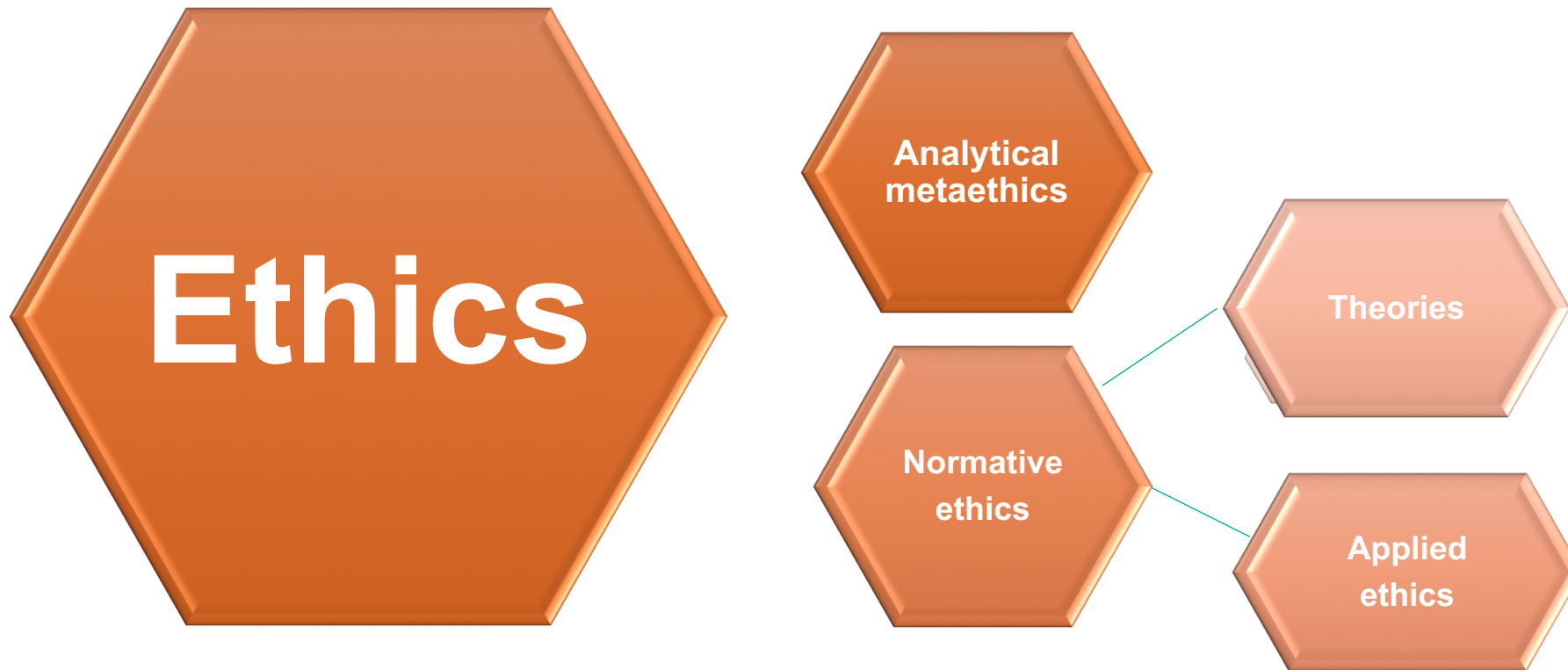
- Avoiding violations and misconduct in research
- Avoiding harm
- Ability to defend and protect one's rights as a researcher
- Improve scientifically high quality of research (and consequently science and society)

## Levels of (research) ethics in practice

- **Legal and regulatory level (legally binding)**
  - International and national regulations, directives and laws, e.g., EU directives, national legislation
- **Level of scientific community and colleagues**
  - Codes of conduct, guidelines, e.g. WMA *Declaration of Helsinki*, All European Academies (ALLEA): *The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*, Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) in collaboration with WHO (2016): *International Ethical Guidelines for Health-related Research Involving Humans*
- **Individual level**
  - Choices, identifying emerging ethical issues, reacting to them, interpretation of ethical concepts, specifying & balancing principles and rules



# The discipline of academic Anglo-American style philosophical ethics



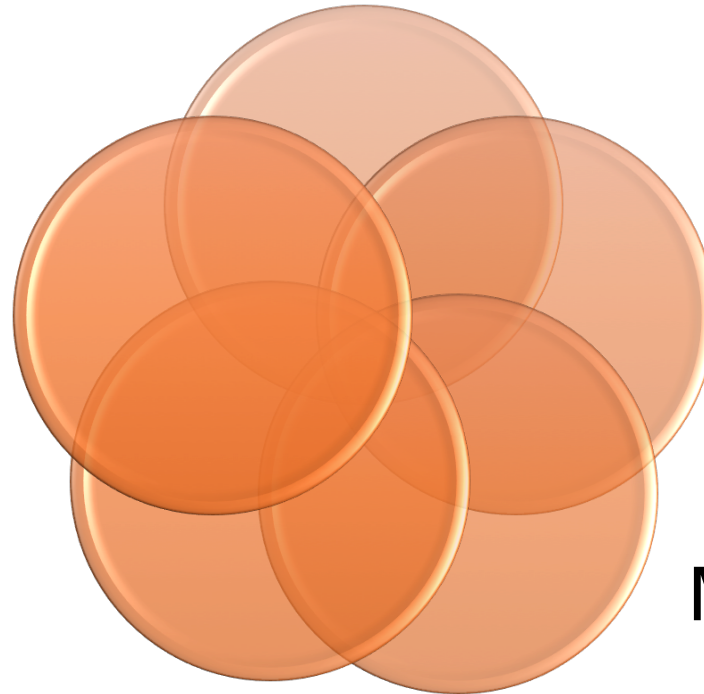
Public health  
ethics

Population  
ethics

Professional  
ethics

Research  
ethics

Medical and  
Health care  
ethics



# Ethical dilemmas in Peripartum Depression Disorder:

- How to solve ethical dilemmas in PPD?
  - Identification of moral wrong-doing
  - Empirical ethical dilemmas and genuine ethical dilemmas (Launis 2003)
- The division between empirical ethical and genuine ethical dilemmas is not only theoretical categorisation:



it is important in guiding our action how to solve the dilemmas

- Attempts to solve ethical dilemmas involves utilising
  - metaethics, normative ethics and metaphysics
  - scientific knowledge and technology



## Moral wrong-doing

- Action that violates ethical principles or goes against morally right action
- Relevant features: Intentionality, understanding and control
  - What about careless action or negligence?
- Dimensions in reacting to moral wrong doing:
  - Backward looking responsibility (sanctions)
  - Forward looking responsibility (prevention)

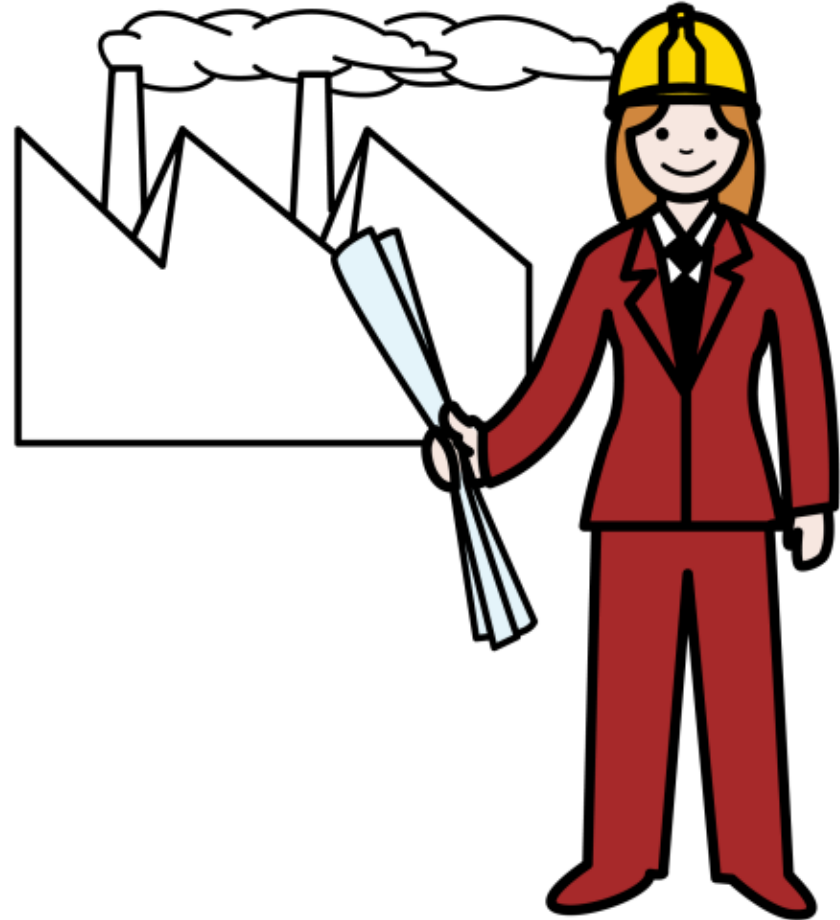


## Methodological alternatives to solve dilemmas

- Top down
  - Bottom up
  - Coherence
- 
- In addition to these approaches, we need ethical principles, rules, paradigm examples or other ethical tools to be applied in these theoretical frameworks.

# Top down model

- The right theory/principle/value  
→ application
- Challenges:
  - The right theory
  - The right interpretation
    - The complexity of the real world
    - Hard cases
- Photo: Papunet.net



# Bottom up model

- Analysis starts off from the case
  - Paradigmatic examples
  - Inductive reasoning in which principles are not primary
- Challenges:
  - The use of comparisons and analogous examples requires norms and values
  - The emphasis on the person who does the analysis (critical distance)



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# Coherence model

- Method of Reflective equilibrium  
(John Rawls, Norman Daniels)
- The model can be updated
  - Introduction of new principles, facts etc.
  - Modification of initial considered judgments
- Challenges:
  - Achieving balance (stable equilibrium)
  - coherence/best explanation



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## Empirical ethical dilemmas

- Empirical ethical dilemma is often based on scientific uncertainty
- Attempts to solve it may be dependent on
  - Technological development
  - Acquisition of scientific knowledge
- Differences in views may involve what is the acceptable level of harm/risk
  - The level may be dependent on direct or indirect consequences



## Genuine ethical dilemmas: Part I Debates

- When there is a genuine disagreement about the moral acceptability of action or practice
- On a societal level it is difficult to evaluate which view has better justification
- Uncertainty of the right action is in this context collective



## Genuine ethical dilemmas: Part II

### Individual decision-making

- The individual has conflicting interests/values and thus has difficulties in deciding which way to act
  - A conflict between two ethical principles/views
  - A conflict in the way in which one should understand the ethical principles that guides the action



## Potentially conflicting ethical principles

- The number of ethical principles
- "Georgetown mantra" (Beauchamp & Childress 2001)
  - Respect for autonomy
  - Beneficence
  - Nonmaleficence
  - Justice
  
- Hierarchy?
- Grounds/justification?
- Professional codes



## Genuine ethical dilemma: Part III

### Demand for reasons

- We have a clear view how some code of conduct or an action is morally acceptable or unacceptable, but
  - for some reason, we cannot name or specify the ethically relevant feature(s) that should be applied in this case
- This kind of reason would be morally important to find/identify (sometimes also juridically)



## Identifying morally relevant features and balancing them

- It is important for the ethical analysis to identify features that are relevant in the case
  - Morally right making features
  - Morally wrong making features
- It is not always self-evident how these relate to each other



## Example: Doctrine of double effect

1. the action in itself from its very object be good or at least indifferent;
2. that the good effect and not the evil effect be intended;
3. that the good effect be not produced by means of the evil effect;
4. that there be a proportionately grave reason for permitting the evil effect

(Alison 2019)



## Genuine ethical dilemmas: Part IV

### Interpretative ethical issues

- In the rapid development of technology or similar, it is often the case that we are confronted with problems that appear novel
- Conceptual problem and our traditional concepts may not be applicable in this novel case
  - Not merely a question of framework
  - The challenge to identify and evaluate morally relevant features





## Distributive justice in PPD

- The formal definition: to treat equally those who are the same in relevant respects, and treat unequally those who are unlike in relevant respects, in direct proportion to the differences between them.
- However:
  - lack of substance

## Task

- Form a small group (3-4 people) and formulate (15 min)
  - 1) empirical ethical dilemma (relates to scientific uncertainty) and
  - 2) genuine ethical dilemma (a genuine disagreement about the moral acceptability)which are related to PPD
- Discussion about your dilemmas

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