

HumEthNet REFLECTIONS

Volume 1. Issue 2.

September 2013

Photo credit page 2.

HumEthNet is a COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE committed to developing & using research, education, policy, and/or tools to ADDRESS ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN HUMANITARIAN HEALTHCARE in order

to reduce practitioners' moral distress and improve ethical practice and decision-making AT MULTIPLE LEVELS.

-HumEthNet working statement

Conferences in review



Summing up of conferences and events in the Spring and Summer months.

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In Focus



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Book Review: Empire of Humanity



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hhe momentum...

There has been much activity in the domain of humanitarian health ethics in the past months. It certainly seems that momentum is building and that the contribution of ethical inquiry related to humanitarian health practice and research is gaining attention.

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Visit the website:

www.humanitarianhealthethics.net



humanitarian healthcare ethics
reflecting on ethical practice

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Several new publications have appeared related to humanitarian health ethics and which are listed in this newsletter (p. 7). Several important events took place this spring (p. 4-5). The EU COST Action on Disaster Bioethics held its first full meeting in Dublin this April. This meeting, under the leadership of Donal O'Mathuna and colleagues, included discussion of a range of applied ethics concerns related to disasters. In June, the World Association of Disaster and Emergency Medicine held their conference in Manchester. The Canadian Humanitarian and Disaster Response Training in Toronto also included sessions on ethics and principles.

A new feature in this issue of the newsletter is the inclusion of book reviews that are relevant to humanitarian health ethics (p. 6). We welcome submission of reviews of books, documentaries or expositions for future editions of the newsletter, as well as other contributions such as photography, short commentaries or event announcements.

Finally, as a follow-up from the Forum held in November 2013, we encourage participants and invited guests who were unable to attend to take part in a short "member survey" (p. 3) to more clearly define individual membership interests, and identify short/long-term goals for HumEthNet.

Once again, thank you all for your interest and contributions to the HumEthNet.

Warm regards,

Dr. Lisa Schwartz, McMaster University, &
Dr. Matthew Hunt, McGill University,
Humanitarian Healthcare Ethics Research Group co-directors.



Road construction in Nyanza, Rwanda.

On the front page:

Photo of patients with their families waiting for healthcare in Jinotega, Nicaragua.

Photo by Elysée Nouvet.

Contribute to **REFLECTIONS**:

If you have comments on newsletter content, are interested in submitting relevant article/book/resource announcement or other news to an upcoming newsletter, please contact: humethnet@gmail.com

IN FOCUS

John Pringle



John Pringle while working with MSF.

Since early 2010, an unprecedented lead-poisoning outbreak in northern Nigeria has killed hundreds of children and poisoned thousands of others. I went at the start of the outbreak as an epidemiologist with MSF. I had been in northern Nigeria a few years earlier for meningitis outbreaks, but this was altogether different. Since returning from the field, I have seen there is struggle to make sense of the situation. For some, the disaster is biomedical, and for others, it is socio-economic. While it is important to understand how and why the disaster occurred, it is also important to critically examine the response. What does the response tell us about the workings and failings of international humanitarianism? What are its implications for global health?

My current doctoral research examines the international response to the northern Nigerian lead-poisoning outbreak as a case study in contemporary international humanitarianism, with a lens from global health ethics. It is a qualitative study, which is new to me. I am interviewing key and conducting a media situating the data (*a la* the deeper political, context. I have participants and collected related news articles and This study highlights ethical issues and challenges within an international response to an economy-generated environmental disaster. My findings will offer insight into the apparent poverty of global public health and the urgent need for international humanitarianism.

For some, the disaster is biomedical, and for others, it is socio-economic.

international responders and document analysis, Michel Foucault) within economic, and historical interviewed twenty-one close to three hundred published documents.

HumEthNet MEMBER SURVEY:

[Here is a quick survey](#) about interests and directions for members who were invited or attended the Humanitarian Healthcare Ethics Forum in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada in November 2012.

FILL IT OUT TODAY to give us direction for TOMORROW!

If you cannot access the survey by the link, here is the URL:

<http://fluidsurveys.com/surveys/sonya-de-laet/humethnet-member-survey/>

2013 Conferences @ a Glance

WCDEM | 28-31 May 2013

Focusing on professionalism in humanitarian and disaster medicine and stressing the indiscriminate nature of disasters, this year's World Congress on Disaster and Emergency Medicine, held in Manchester, UK, brought together scholars and health practitioners from around the



world to share expertise and knowledge to improve prevention, preparedness, and outcomes in the face of disasters. According to Dr. Paul Arbon, WADEM President, the work of those represented at

WCDEM "truly can protect communities, save lives, improve recovery and encourage the development of more disaster resilient communities."

HumEthNet involvement included Dr. Johan Van Schreeb on the organizing end and a presentation by Dr. Lisa Schwartz "HHEAT: The Humanitarian Health Ethics Analysis Tool, which received encouraging feedback.

COST Action | 25 & 26 April 2013

Representatives from 27 countries attended the conference entitled 'Disaster Bioethics: Addressing ethical issues triggered by disasters', which involved working groups developing the Action's work plan for the rest of the 2013, and four keynote lectures. The Action has four

Disaster Bioethics

working groups examining ethical challenges in different areas of disaster planning and response. The four working groups are: Healthcare Ethics; Bioethics, Culture and Moral Theory; Research Ethics; and, Ethics and Governance.

The lectures included:

Dr Jay Marlowe, University of Auckland, New Zealand on 'Refugee background communities (post) disaster: The Canterbury Earthquakes and implications for research.'

Dr Chiara Lepora, Middle East Program Manager, Médecins sans Frontières on 'How disasters expose the limitations of standard ethical guidelines.'

Professor Michele Landis Dauber, Stanford University, USA on 'The Sympathetic State.'

Dr Andreas Reis, Ethics & Health, World Health Organization, Switzerland on 'Ethics in epidemics, pandemics, and public health crises: WHO's activities.'

More information about the event can be found [here](#).

Podcasts of the 4 keynote lectures are available [here](#) or from the Action website at <http://DisasterBioethics.eu>.

The Action is funded for four years. Anyone with relevant experience or interest can join the Action to receive announcements about future events or engage in its work. An application to join is available at: <http://disasterbioethics.eu/index.php/about-us/target-audience>, or inquiries can be sent to DisasterBioethics@dcu.ie.

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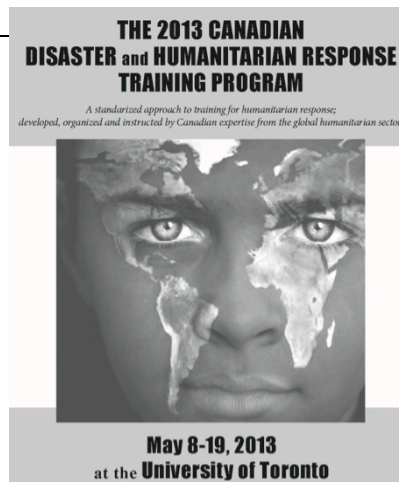
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2013 Canadian Disaster and Humanitarian Response Training

From May 8-19, the 2013 Canadian Disaster and Humanitarian Response Training Program provided participants with 'globally-recognized competencies relevant to humanitarian work'. The program included in-classroom learning and participation in a 3-day Field Simulation. Experienced field practitioners and organizations informed the content of the program. The program was led by Dr. Kirsten Johnson, Assistant Professor in the Department of Family Medicine and Director of the Humanitarian Studies Initiative at McGill University in Montreal. Other HumEthNet members involved this year included Dr. Lynda Redwood-Campbell, Dr. Lisa Schwartz, Marilyn McHarg, Barry Pakes, and John Pringle.

Participants gained: Competency-based essentials in humanitarian response practice recognized by NGOs, Canadian universities and government as the standard for professional-level humanitarian training; solid foundations to building a career in international humanitarian research and/or practice; and the opportunity to become part of the humanitarian sector community.

Follow the [link](#) for a brief look at one aspect of the simulation portion of the program.



New film releases

[Access to the Danger Zone](#) is a new film about MSF experiences and practices.

[I Know Where I'm Going](#), an affecting film about a local ICRC Staff member. Available here: <http://intercrossblog.icrc.org/blog/i-know-where-im-going>

[Remote Area Medical](#) is about "pop-up" clinics for people in the US who have limited access to primary healthcare.

[Machine Gun Preacher](#) tells the story of a "rebel who found his cause."



BOOK REVIEW *by Renaud Boulanger & Veronique Fraser*

Barnett, Michael. (2011). *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism*. Cornell University Press: New York. 296 p.

In naming his book *Empire of Humanity*, Michael Barnett sought to direct attention to the similarities that can exist between an empire and humanitarianism. In doing so, Barnett shows that while humanitarianism is often portrayed as revolutionary and aimed at creating positive change in the world, it is also fundamentally counter-revolutionary. As such, it can be subject to the critique that its policies and practices reflect the features of a modern empire, including (Western) hegemony and paternalism. Yet Barnett is also keenly aware that speaking of humanitarianism in the singular risks being overly reductionist. Instead, the author is adamant that we should speak of humanitarianisms and of their complex tensions, thereby successfully offering an account that is nuanced and well developed.

The *Empire of Humanity* is divided into three sections, each exploring one of what Barnett classifies as the three ages of humanitarianism: imperial humanitarianism, neo-humanitarianism, and liberal humanitarianism. Although each age has defining characteristics, well situated in the volume in their historical context, Barnett also demonstrates that many of the tensions encountered in today's humanitarianism have in fact been recurrent. These tensions include care vs. control, altruism vs. self-interest, intentions vs. outcomes, and possibility vs. disillusionment.



Barnett also suggests that as humanitarian action comes to encompass more and more facets of life, its protagonists benefit from increasing power and ascendancy. Indeed, in the words of the author, taking on new obligations creates “a new apparatus of control” (p.64).

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Call for cases

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada's innovative web-based [bioethics curriculum](#) currently addresses key topics under seven broad categories using a case description with structured analyses, to support education in bioethics for residents and Fellows in practice. Fellows are encouraged to consider participating in the development of new cases on emerging ethical issues and challenges not currently addressed within the current curriculum. Letters of intent outlining your proposed case must be submitted online no later than **October 1, 2013**. To find out more, including a list of suggested topics and submission guidelines, please [click here](#).

Funding opportunities

The Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC) programme aims to improve health outcomes by strengthening the evidence base for public health interventions in humanitarian crises. Though the first call for applications had a deadline of Sept 10, 2013, more are expected in the new year. See [here](#) for more information.



New publications...

* Authored by Network member(s)



*Abu-Sada, Caroline, Editor. (2012). Dilemmas, Challenges, and Ethics of Humanitarian Action: Reflections on Médecins Sans Frontières' Perception Project. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

*Abu-Sada, Caroline, Editor. (2012). In the Eyes of Others: How people in crises perceive humanitarian aid. USA: MFS-USA. Originally published in France as *Dans l'oeil des autres: Perceptions de l'action humanitaire et de MSF* by Editions Antipodes.

* Duroch, Françoise and Caroline Abu-Sada. (2013). Perspectives from the field. International Humanitarian Law Magazine. Issue 1: Healthcare In Danger. Australian Red Cross: p.15.

*Hunt, Matthew R, Lisa Schwartz and Veronique Fraser. (2013). "How far do you go and where are the issues surrounding that?" Dilemmas at the boundaries of clinical competency in humanitarian health work. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*. 28 (5): 1-7.

Jecker NS. "The problem with rescue medicine." *J Med Philos*. 2013 Feb;38(1):64-81. doi: 10.1093/jmp/jhs056. Epub 2012 Dec 23.

*Johnson, Kirsten. "Professionalizing humanitarian action." IN: Abu-Sada, C. Ed, Dilemmas, Challenges, and Ethics of Humanitarian Action: Reflections on Médecins Sans Frontières' Perceptions Project. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012.

Karunakara, Unni, & Frances Stevenson. Ending Neglect of Older People in the Response to Humanitarian Emergencies. December 8, 2012.

<http://www.plosmedicine.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pmed.1001357>

Moodley, Keymanthri, Kate Hardie, Michael J Selgelid, Ronald J Waldman, Peter Strebel, Helen Rees & David N Durrheim. Ethical considerations for vaccination programmes in acute humanitarian emergencies. *Bull World Health Organ* 2013;91:290–297, doi:10.2471/BLT.12.113480. <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/91/4/12-113480.pdf>

* Pringle, John and Donald C. Cole, "The Nigerian lead-poisoning epidemic: The role of neoliberal globalization and the challenges for humanitarian ethics." IN: Abu-Sada, C. Ed, Dilemmas, Challenges, and Ethics of Humanitarian Action: Reflections on Médecins Sans Frontières' Perceptions Project. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012.

* Schwartz L, Hunt M, Sinding C, et al. La déontologie des activités cliniques occidentales est-elle applicable aux contextes humanitaires a l'étranger?. In: Abu-Sada C, ed. *Jeux de miroir: Réflexions sur MSF et l'action humanitaire*. Lausanne, Switzerland: Antipodes; 2013:77-92.

Call for
proposals:



ALNAP

Active Learning Network for
Accountability and Performance
in Humanitarian Action

11-13 March 2014

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Encuentro 2014 | Concordia U
Montréal, Québec, June 21-28, 2014

**Application deadline is Wednesday,
September 25, 2013.**

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Barnett shows how these new obligations in part derive from the humanitarians' successful appropriation of the language of needs, perceived as being depoliticising. But Barnett counters that the so-called apolitical nature of humanitarian organisations is at best self-delusional and, at worst, a self-serving façade. He offers several examples where humanitarian organisations choose to be inconsistent with regards to their commitment to impartiality. Thus, it is made clear that the ever-expanding focus on need is a double-edged sword: "the more we feel a responsibility for the welfare of others and a capacity to improve their lives, the more likely that we will feel justified overlooking matters of consent and other limits on our power" (p.35). Barnett quotes a *Médecins Sans Frontières* representative who says that paternalism is the "slope on which we are constantly sliding" (p.223). This theme of paternalism is one to which Barnett returns recurrently.

The *Empire of Humanity* also convincingly argues that certain elements of the humanitarian field that are being portrayed as novel in fact have deep historical roots. A good example is the discussions about monitoring and evaluation, whose seeds are shown to have been planted more than a century ago. Barnett further highlights key turning points in international politics and he explains their impact on humanitarianism. In this sense, his text provides a well-balanced account both of how humanitarianism has influenced and was influenced by geopolitics. Far less successful is the author's attempt to convince the reader that there are three "forces of humanitarianism": destruction, production and compassion. Though an interesting idea, it is one that is neither well explained nor well defended. Furthermore, the text is at times repetitive and Barnett has a disconcerting tendency to grandiloquent phrasing: "Compassion may be the oxygen of humanitarianism, but destruction runs through its veins" (p.224). That said, the *Empire of Humanity*'s thorough grounding in the history of the 19th and 20th century provides convincing evidence for Barnett's thought-provoking thesis that humanity seems to "rally around humanitarianism at precisely the moment that its humanity is most suspect" (p.14).

ABOUT REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS is a quarterly publication written by and geared to a range of actors in the realm of humanitarian healthcare.

The newsletter is available in both electronic and pdf formats. Subscription to the newsletter is free.

We welcome submissions in the form of humanitarian healthcare ethics-related events promotion, reviews of books, films, exhibits or events, and recommendations for new readings, viewings, and websites. If you wish to make a submission, offer feedback or suggestions, write to us at humethnet@gmail.com.

The Humanitarian Healthcare Ethics Network, HumEthNet, was inaugurated on November 22-24, 2012, in Hamilton, Canada at the Humanitarian Healthcare Ethics (hhe) Forum, hosted by the hhe Research Group with funding from CIHR. Participants are from a variety of disciplinary, organizational, professional, and country backgrounds engaged in the development of realistic applications for ethics in humanitarian healthcare practice. For information on membership contact humethnet@gmail.com.

Funding for the hhe Research Group comes from:



For more information on the HumEthNet or the hhe Research Group visit:

www.humanitarianhealthethics.net