

## **Ethical challenges in health assessment**

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**TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE:** Topic: Ethics in health assessment. Target audiences: Epidemiologists, practitioners of health assessment, health policy specialists.

**ABSTRACT:** Health assessment is a critical component of developing health policies and raises some ethical questions that should be considered. First, data used in health assessments contains error. How should this error be disclosed? Who decides if there is too much error? Second, health assessments generalize populations so how do we balance the desire for a coherent message with the uniqueness of individuals and groups within the populations we study? Third, we like to think that presentation of data is not prioritization, but in reality, the data we present shapes the prioritization process. How do we address this unintended role?

Our approach to solving these problems is to open up discussion with our audience at the OPHA conference. We will bring some examples from our work and from the literature to frame the discussion, but primarily we will seek to engage the audience in a debate about these ethical issues.

We do not expect to present a conclusion in this panel discussion. We want to foster the exchange of ideas so that all of us can leave the OPHA Conference with a greater awareness of these issues and some tools that will help us address these challenges in our work.

**OBJECTIVE(S):** An attendee to this panel presentation will be able to identify a number of ethical questions that practitioners of health assessments must consider. They will discuss the nature of these questions, the challenges they pose, and possible solutions with the panel and with other attendees. They will describe additional ethical questions that they have faced to other attendees at the panel, and will formulate strategies for resolving them. They will have started building a network of like-minded public health practitioners who are aware of the need for ethical practice in health assessment.

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