

Humanity and equity: How do short-term medical teams measure-up?

Presenters: Anita and Michael Dohn (DohnFamily@sams-usa.org)

Everyone, Everywhere 2011, 13-16 October 2011, Estes Park, Colorado

The Four Areas of Health Care Evaluation¹

- **Effectiveness** (or efficacy): The extent to which an intervention produces a beneficial result under the usual conditions of clinical care.
- **Cost-effectiveness** (or efficiency): The cost of providing health care intervention in relation to the improvement in health outcomes.
- **Humanity**: The quality of being civil, courteous, and obliging to others. Respect and kindness. Quality of being humane. Social, psychological, and ethical acceptability of the intervention to the people who receive it.
- **Equity**: Fair distribution. Fairness, defined in terms of equality of opportunity, provision, use, and outcome.

Elements of Humanity

- **Dignity**: Principle that human beings are worthy of respect and have the right to be treated with courtesy and with consideration for their feelings.
- **Autonomy**: Principle that human beings have free will and the right to make choices about their actions and about what happens to them.
- **Beneficence**: The principle of striving to do good.
- **Non-maleficence**: The principle of avoiding harm.

Elements of Equity

- **Opportunity**
- **Utilization or use**
- **Quality**
- **Outcome**

Horizontal equity: Equal resources for equal need. The equal treatment of individuals or groups in the same circumstances.

Vertical equity: Different resources for different needs. The principle that individuals that are unequal should be treated differently according to their level of need.

Ethical perspectives on distributive justice (an oversimplified synopsis)

- To each person an equal share.
- To each person according to individual need.
- To each person according to individual efforts.
- To each person according to societal contributions.
- To each person according to merit.

Divisions of distributive justice (another oversimplified synopsis)

Libertarian theory: Belief in the primacy of individual freedom (e.g., political liberty, free speech, economic freedom, etc). Minimal state and a free market to the extent that individual liberty is protected. Entitled to wealth when justly acquired.

Liberal theory: Emphasizes individual liberty, but includes the concept of "need" in its construction. Recognizes that free market failures can occur and can produce unequal distribution of assets that may need correction. *Utilitarianism* is a type of liberal theory that argues that there is a moral obligation to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number (efficiency). (Star Trek's Mr. Spock was a utilitarian: "The good of the many outweighs the good of the few.").

Collectivist theory: Has the three main goals of equality, freedom, and fraternity (with an emphasis on equality). It is egalitarian and in favor of proactive measures to redistribute rights and wealth to correct imbalances and inequalities. Variations range from operating through the market system to giving the state the primary role.

Anita Dohn, MD, MSc (Public Health)

Michael Dohn, MD, MSc (Public Health)



¹ Content for the presentation comes from various sources. *Health Care Evaluation* (Smith S, Sinclair D, Raine R & Reeves B. 2005. Maidenhead, England: Open University Press) served as the primary source for definitions and concepts in the presentation.