Ethics and Pandemic Flu: a Perspective from the UK

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Presentation Plan

• UK’s ethical framework
  – Origins
  – Purpose
  – Summary

• During the A H1N1 (2009) Pandemic, examples:
  – Post mortems
  – Antiviral policy
  – Vaccination programme

• What next?
UK’s Pandemic Flu Ethical Framework: Origins

• 2006 – international literature review including:
  – “Stand on Guard for Thee” (Canada)
  – National Ethics Advisory Committee (New Zealand)
  – WHO working papers (prior to their 2007 report)

• Advisory body: CEAPI (Committee on Ethical Aspects of Pandemic Influenza)
  – Multi-disciplinary
  – 2 lay people, including specialist advisor on minority ethnic issues
  – England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales
UK’s Pandemic Flu Ethical Framework: Pre-2009 Pandemic

- Short, user-friendly expression of principles (underpinned by broad spectrum of ethical thought)

- For policy makers and planners (respecting ethical frameworks of professional groups)

- Checklist: aiming to rule out the ethically unacceptable

- With framework developed detailed considerations of all key pandemic flu preparedness national guidance eg
  - Vaccine prioritisation
  - Managing deaths
  - Mental health guidance
Responding to pandemic influenza: the ethical framework for policy and planning

- Fundamental underpinning principle - equal concern & respect

- Ethical principles:
  - Respect
  - Minimising harm
  - Fairness
  - Working Together
  - Reciprocity
  - Keeping things in proportion
  - Flexibility
  - Good decision-making
    - Openness & transparency
    - Inclusiveness
    - Accountability
    - Reasonableness
Uses in the Influenza A H1N1 (2009) Pandemic (1)

- CEAPI
  - Considered decision and guidance documents in committee & in writing
  - Direct discussions with Chair
  - Considerable reliance on key DH expert (Dr Elaine Gadd)

- Eg 1: Should post mortems be compulsory?
  - Respect?
  - Minimise harm?
  - In proportion?
Uses in the Influenza A H1N1 (2009) Pandemic (2)

• Eg 2: antiviral policy: treat all or targeted approach?
  – Different countries, different views
  – Science not conclusive
  – Ethics important
  – Paper considered by cross-Government and 4 nations Ministers
  → neither unethical, both reasonable

• Eg 3: Phase 2 of vaccination programme - children
  – Ethical issues – a factor in guiding the decisions
Lessons Learned

• Few new ethical issues raised in pandemic

• Importance of thinking through key issues in advance

• Ethical framework can assist in assessing new issues as they develop

• CEAPI an asset: can be consulted at any time
What next?

- Examples in local planning
- Review use of ethical framework in swine flu pandemic
- Consider revising approach – review of Pandemic Flu National Framework
- Embedding the wider use of ethical frameworks?
- Professional training
- What else?
Links

www.dh.gov.uk

- Search ‘CEAPI’
  - Ethical framework
  - CEAPI minutes
  - CEAPI’s approach to ethical issues
  - Membership

- Search ‘pandemic flu’
  - Pandemic Flu National Framework (to be updated)
  - Large amount of other guidance

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Thank goodness the hole's at their end!