

# Ethics practice for public health practitioners

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Workshop | TOPHC | March 27, 2015

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for Healthy Public Policy



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sur les politiques publiques et la santé  
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# National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy (NCCHPP)

## Our mandate

- Support public health actors in their efforts to promote healthy public policies

## Our areas of expertise

- The effects of public policies on health
- Generating and using knowledge about policies
- Intersectoral actors and mechanisms
- Strategies to influence policy making



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# Just checking in....

How familiar are you with public health ethics?

**Not much**


**Somewhat  
familiar**

**Expert**



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# What we would like to discuss this morning

- What is public health (PH) ethics?
- Does PH ethics matter?
- How does it work? How can we get started?



# 'Typical' case

10 infected patients (5 adults, 5 children)  
2 infected adults are care workers (volunteers)  
10 doses of antiviral available  
Adults need 2 doses, children 1 dose

do

Descriptive ethics

should

Normative ethics

What  you do?

- 1 dose to everyone?
- 1 dose to each child,  
2 doses to 2 adults?
- Lottery?
- Most disadvantaged first?
- Care workers first?

(strict egalitarianism)

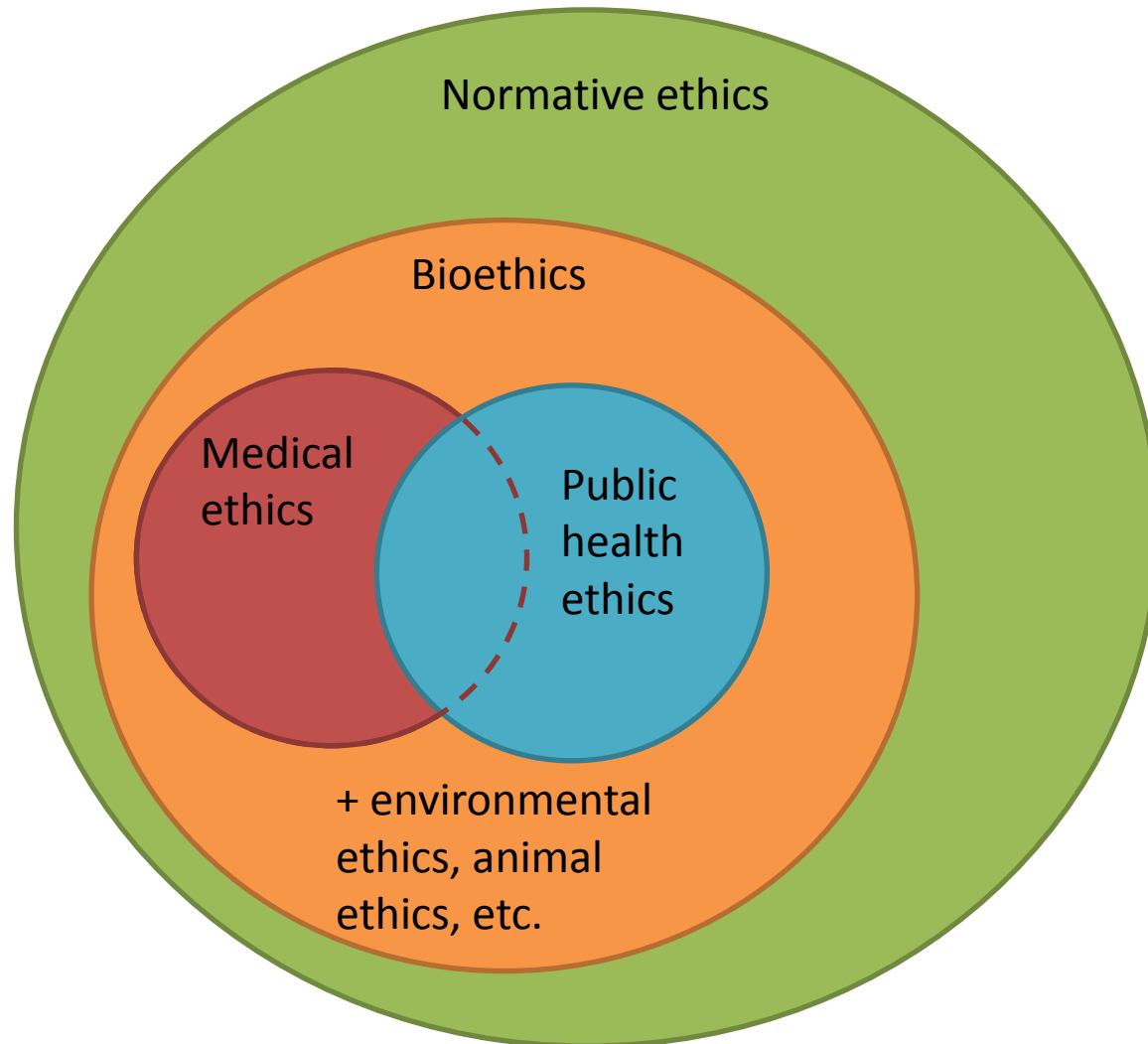
(utilitarianism)

(fair opportunity)

(social justice)

(social utility)

# What is public health ethics?

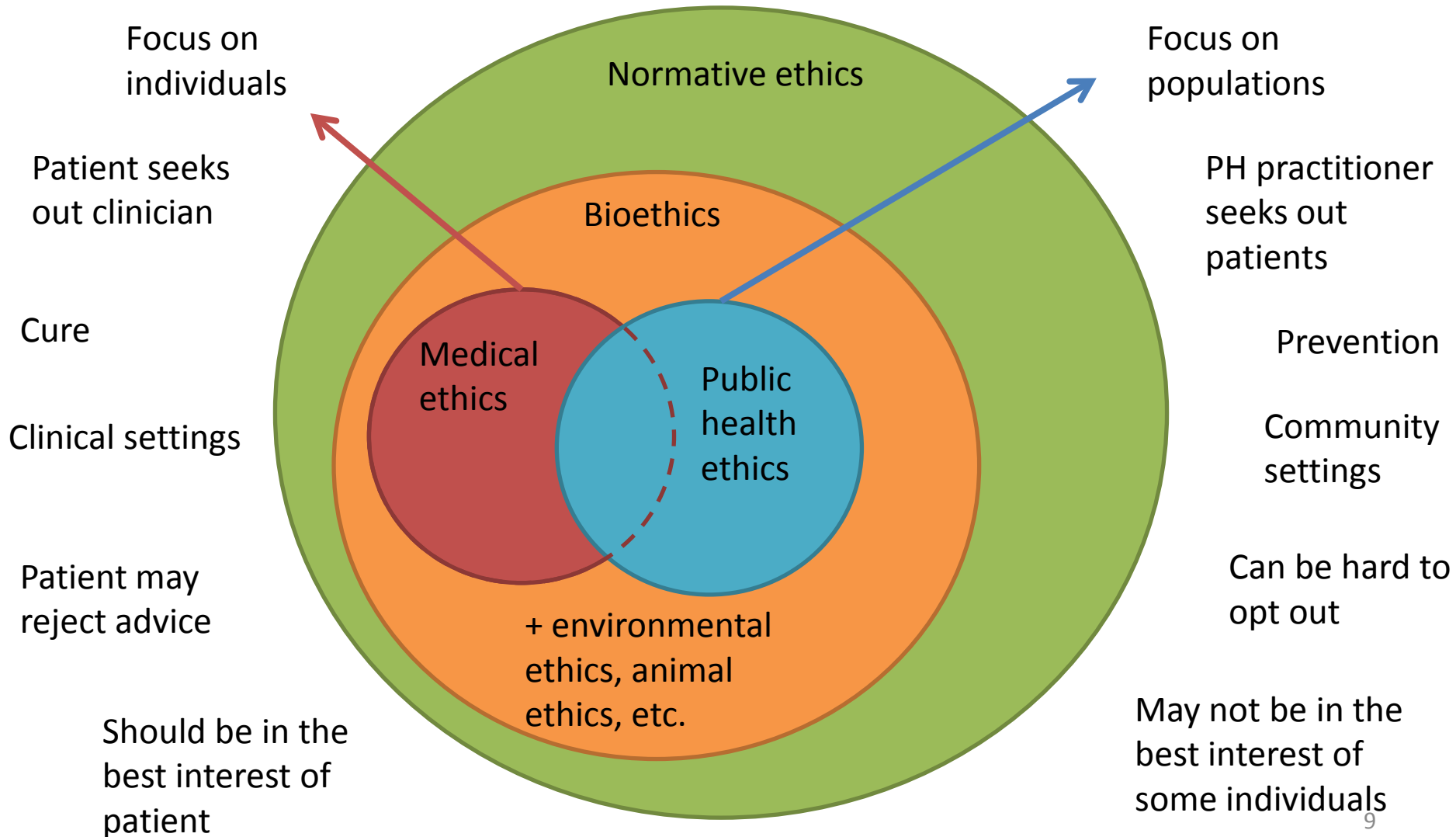


# Other public health cases

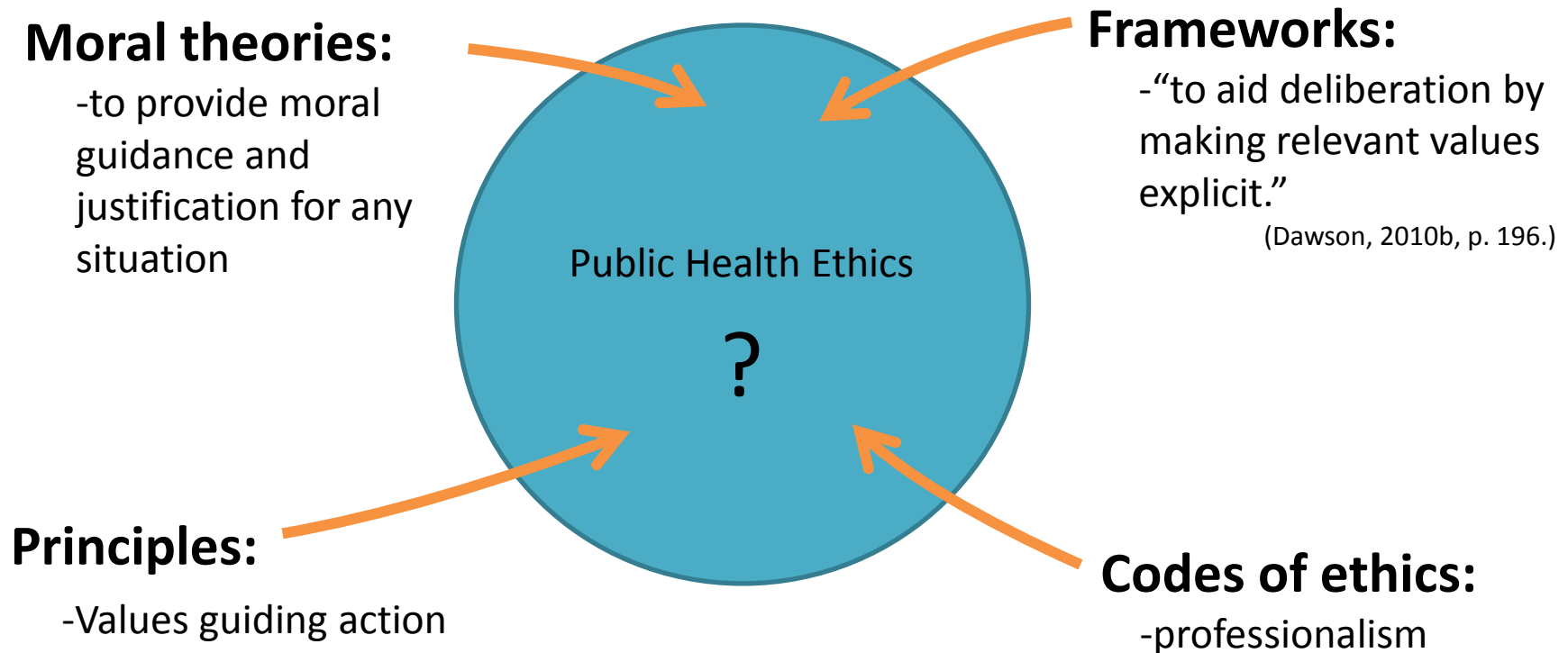
- Water fluoridation
- Smoking ban
- Traffic-calming policy
- Affordable housing
- Menu labelling
- Soda tax
- HPV vaccination
- ...



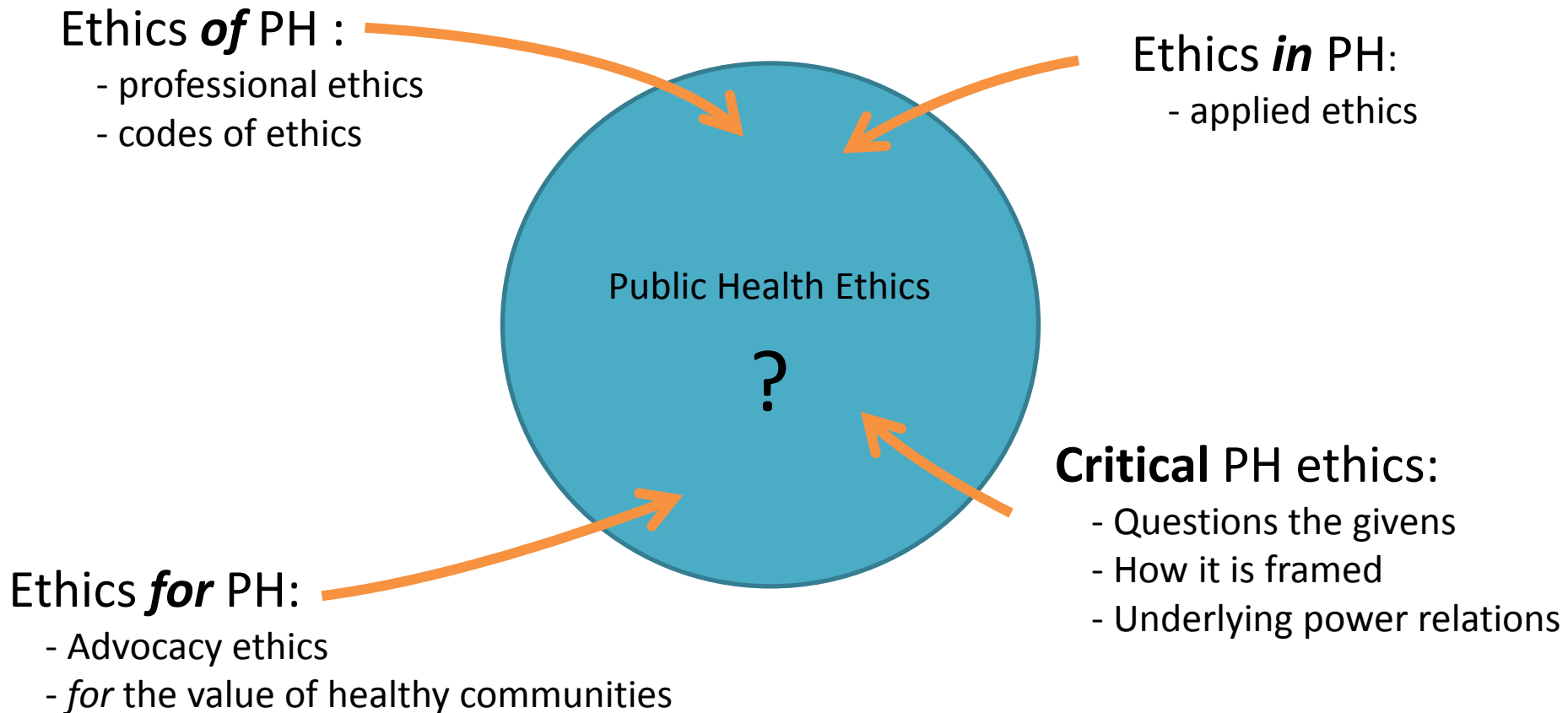
# Medical ethics vs public health ethics



# Mapping public health ethics (1)



# Mapping public health ethics (2)



# Ethics in PH vs. critical PH ethics

10 infected patients (5 adults, 5 children)  
2 infected adults are care workers (volunteers)  
10 doses of antiviral available  
Adults need 2 doses, children 1 dose

## Ethics in PH

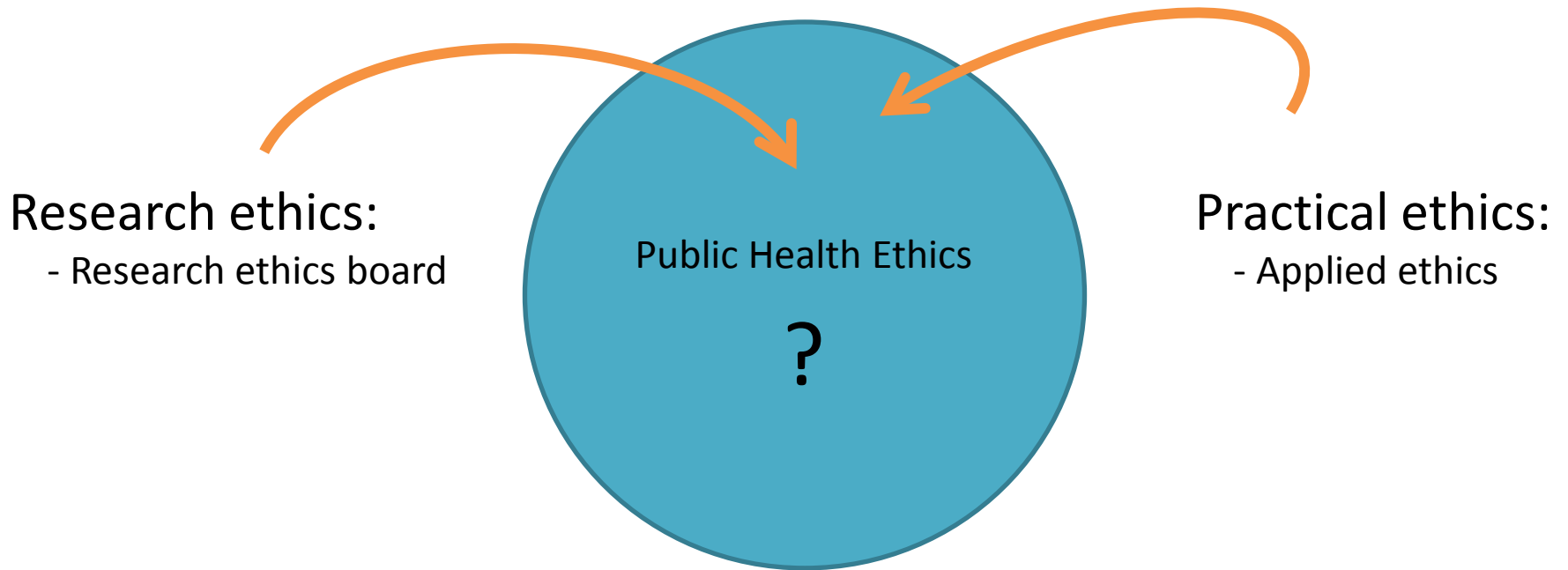
What should you do?

- 1 dose to everyone?
- 1 dose to each child, 2 doses to 2 adults?
- Lottery?
- Most disadvantaged first?
- Care workers first?

## Critical PH ethics

- Why do I have only 10 doses of an experimental antiviral after 38 years of Ebola?
- What social structures produced this situation?
- Would this situation be treated differently if it were in North America?

# Mapping Public Health Ethics (3)



# What is public health ethics?

PH ethics is mostly about what **should** and **shouldn't** be done

- **collectively**
- to protect and promote the health of **communities.**



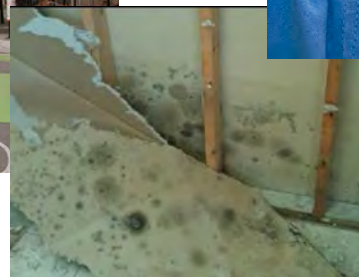
'New Big Hill Playground #1' Photo credit: OldOnliner. Image cropped. Flickr.com



'Dunsmuir Separated Bike Lanes 175' Photo credit: Paul Krueger. Flickr.com



'Flu Shot' Photo credit: WFIU Public Radio. Flickr.com



'mold-testing-water-damage-inspection-mold-removal-sarasota-fl-5' Photo credit: Darryl Snyder. Flickr.com

Next... Why PH ethics?

# Why PH ethics?

10 infected patients (5 adults, 5 children)  
2 infected adults are care workers (volunteers)  
10 doses of antiviral available  
Adults need 2 doses, children 1 dose

## What do you do?

- 1 dose to everyone?
- 1 dose to each child, 2 doses to 2 adults?
- Lottery?
- Most disadvantaged first?
- Care workers first?

**Does it matter?**

**If yes, then PH ethics matters.**

# Why PH ethics?

PH practice is sufficiently different from clinical practice to require its own ethics...

...in order to help:

- **See ethical issues**
- **Deliberate about options**
- **Make decisions**
- **Justify them**



# Questions, comments... ?



Next... How does it work?

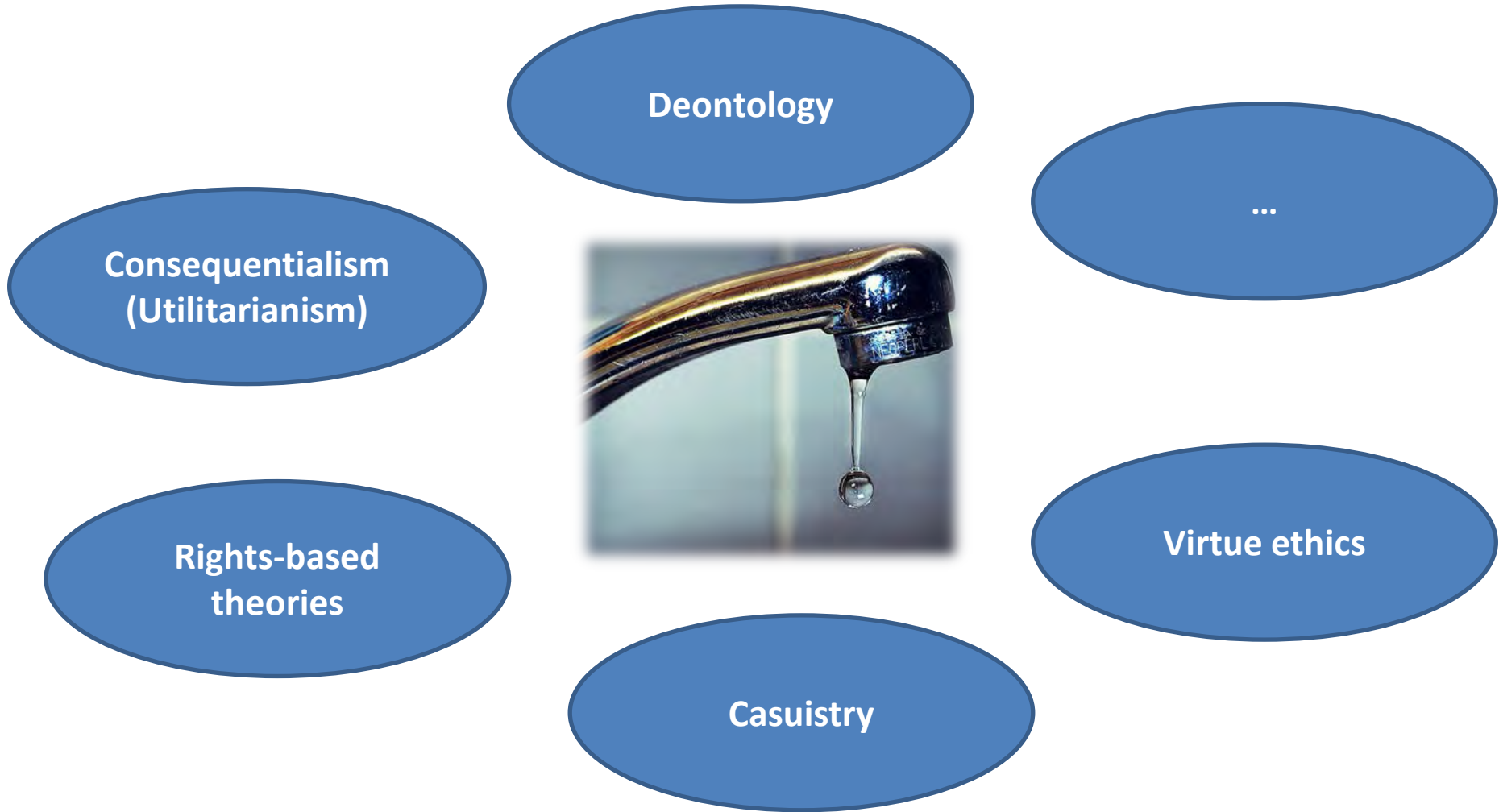
# How does it work?

## Case study: Water fluoridation

Based on community consultations and recommendations from public health, the municipality of Clearwater has decided to fluoridate all municipal water, effective immediately. There remains significant opposition in the community, amounting to about 15% of citizens, particularly from one school district.



# What can ethical theories tell us?



# Utilitarianism

Do that which produces the greatest good for the greatest number of people

- It is consequentialist – i.e., more focused on outcomes (ends), less focused on the means by which they are achieved
- Good equals maximizing happiness / utility / health (e.g., DALYs/QALYs)

“there is no harmful health risk from the fluoridation of community drinking water at current levels and that fluoridation continues to be an effective public health strategy to prevent dental disease”

# Utilitarianism applied to our water fluoridation case...

+

- Less cavities and tooth decay?
- Low-cost way to reach entire population?
- Etc.

-

- More cases of dental fluorosis?
- Less trust in public health interventions?
- Etc.



# Deontology

Never treat people “simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end” - Kant

- Deontological approaches focus more on the means than the ends.... deon = ‘duty’
- Despite various roots and theories, a family of approaches based on following rules, duties, respect for others

“go buy all the fluoride tablets you want, and swallow all the fluoridated toothpaste you can buy, but leave the rest of us free to choose to not have it.”

# Deontology applied to our water fluoridation case...



- Is it infringing on residents' right to choose?
- Could it be designed with a way to opt-out?

# One problem with ethical theories...

- ...is that it is difficult to cover every case and every intuition we have with one unified theory.
- The result is that there are many theories to choose from, each with its strengths and weaknesses which are revealed by specific cases.
- And their strengths cannot be combined in ONE coherent theory (2,500 years and counting...).

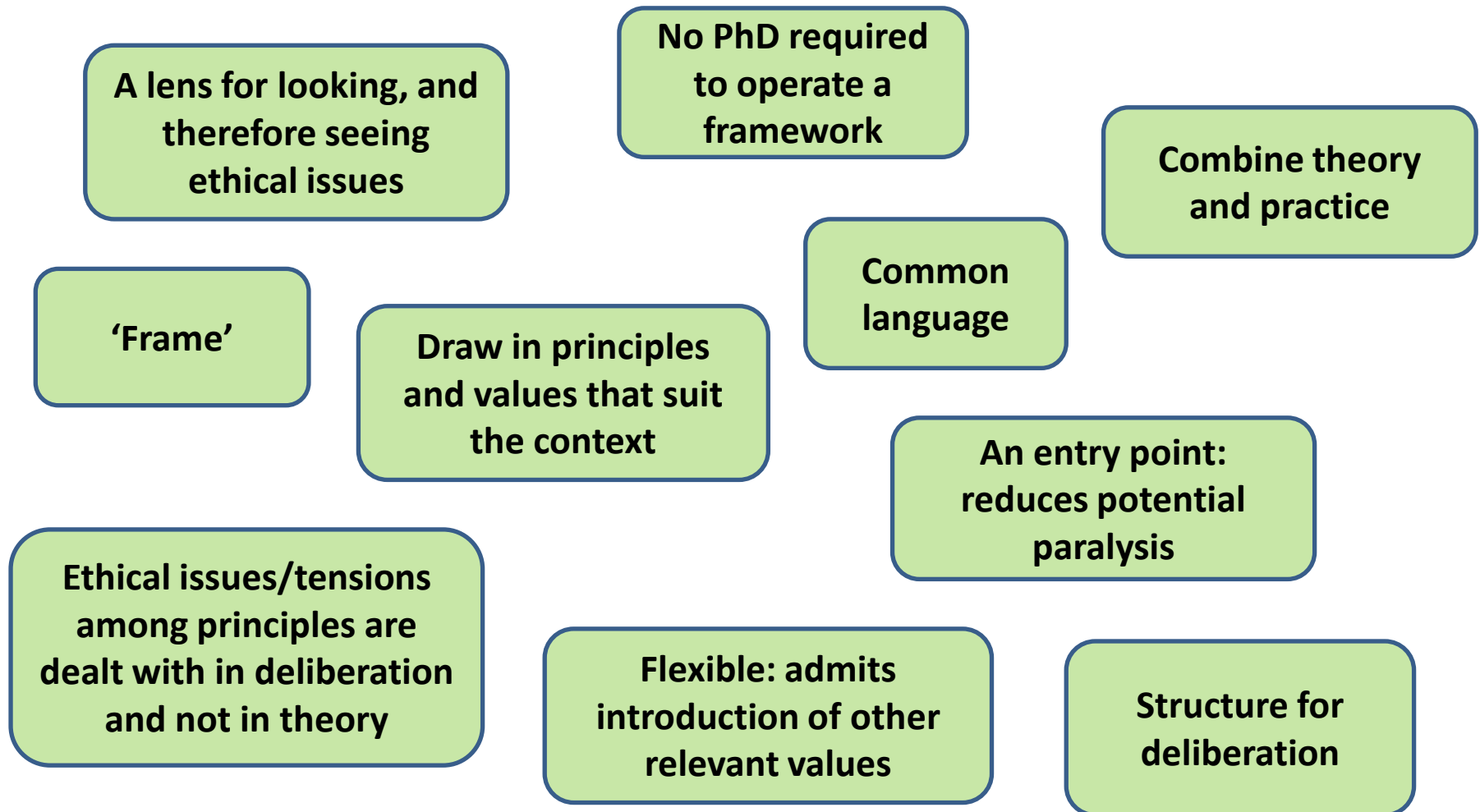


# Principle-based approaches

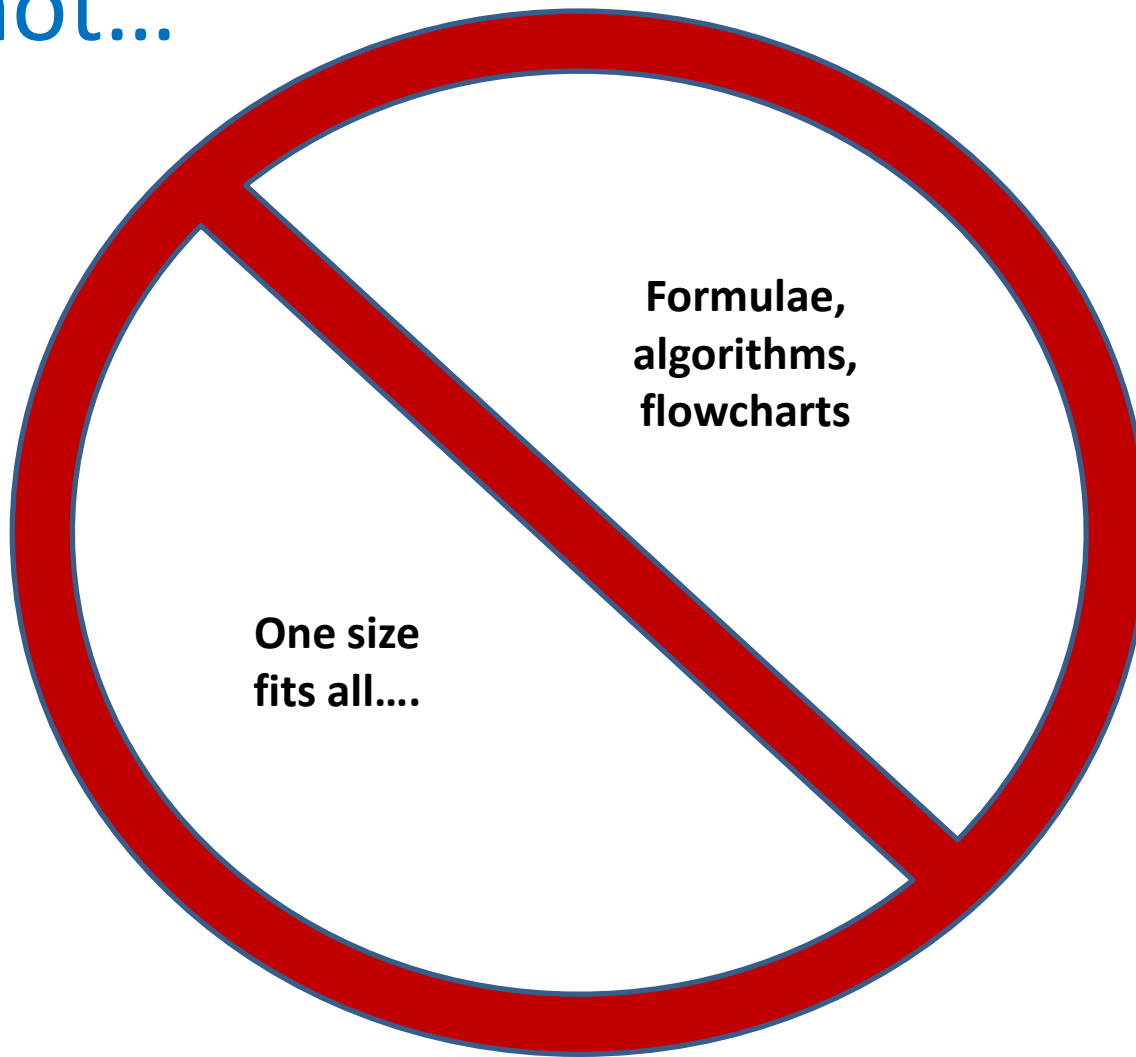
They provide a selection of values and principles, and a means of putting them into application

- A well-known example: Beauchamp and Childress' four principles, a.k.a. 'principlism.'
    - autonomy
    - beneficence
    - non-maleficence
    - justice
- Medical ethics: focus on individuals**
- In public health: **frameworks**

# Frameworks for public health ethics: some positive features



# Frameworks are not...



# Several frameworks in PHE

- **Principle-based:**
  - Provide a series of principles for consideration,
  - Ideally they provide guidance about how to contextualize them for application in different situations, and how to balance them when they conflict.
  - E.g. Upshur (2002); Childress et al., (2002).
- **Question-based:**
  - These pose a series of questions with issues to consider attached to each question,
  - There are principles/values underlying and elicited by the questions.
  - E.g., Kass (2001); Public Health Ontario (2012).
- As they have evolved, frameworks have tended to provide more and clearer guidance about how they are to be applied.

# We'll use two frameworks today

**A) *An ethical framework for the prevention of overweight and obesity: a tool for thinking through a programme's ethical aspects.***

ten Have, M., van der Heide, A., Mackenbach, J. P., & Beaufort, I. D. (2012).

**B) *Putting public health ethics into practice: a systematic framework.***

Marckmann, G., Schmidt, H., Sofaer, N., & Strech, D. (2015).

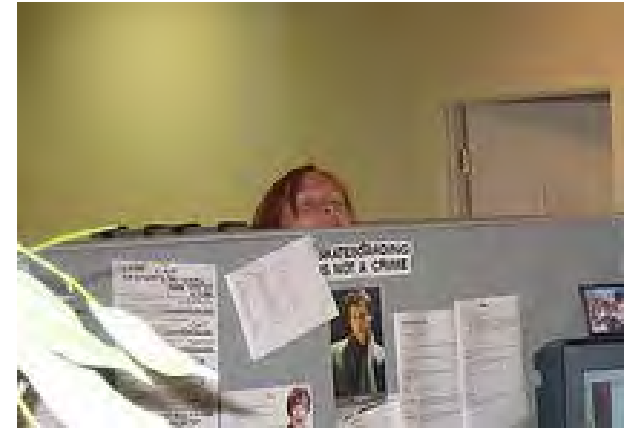
- These are question-based, similar in structure and provide instructions about how to use them.
- There are many other frameworks out there for PHE; we have provided links to several at the end of this PPT.

# Applying an ethics framework to a case

## Case - “Let’s lose a million pounds!”

Use the framework in your handout to guide discussion

1. After an ethical examination of the program, would you approve it? For what reasons?
2. Would the program have to be modified to make it ethically acceptable? Why?
3. What was most helpful in the framework you used?
4. Did the framework fail to highlight anything important?



'What do you see' Photo credit: Rice and Danielle. Image cropped. Flickr.com Creative commons licence: see below



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**30 minutes:** deliberation and decision-making in small groups.

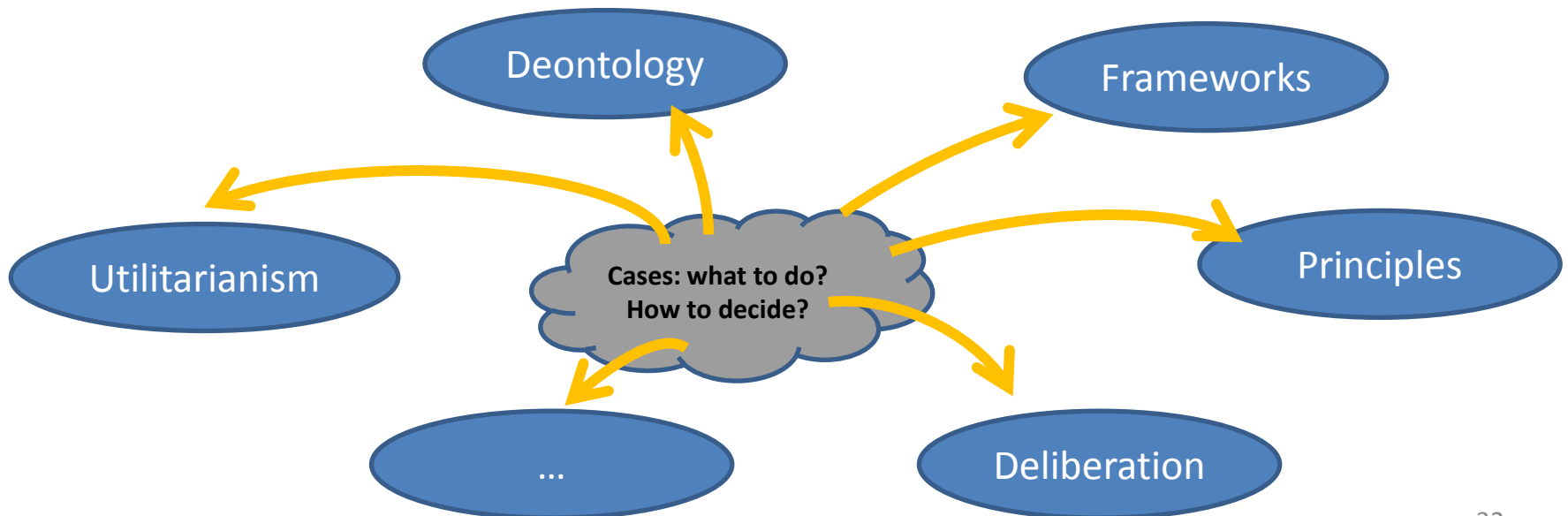
**10-15 minutes:** reporting and discussion among the larger group.

# Case – “Let’s lose a million pounds!”

Your public health unit has been asked to comment on and participate in implementing some of the propositions put forward to meet the city’s goal in the “Let’s lose a million pounds!” challenge. Among the proposed initiatives is a junk food ban for all public buildings (schools, hospitals, government offices, etc.). Only foods deemed healthy will be offered in cafeterias and vending machines, and workers in public buildings will be encouraged to only bring healthy foods to their workplaces. Those seen to be in contravention will be asked to walk a kilometre.

# Now what?

- We have only taken a brief look, but see that:
  - There are many theories, approaches, frameworks and principles in ethics, and more specifically in PH ethics.
  - They offer different perspectives for looking at cases.
  - They can have distinct, sometimes contradictory or conflicting, ethical implications.





# Now what?

- We have only taken a brief look, but see that:
  - There are many theories, approaches, frameworks and principles in ethics, and more specifically in PH ethics.
  - They offer different perspectives for looking at cases.
  - They can have distinct, sometimes contradictory or conflicting, ethical implications.
- Despite this diversity:
  - They can help to clarify issues, to deliberate and to make better decisions.
- Next steps:
  - Take a look at the other frameworks listed at the end of our presentation and discuss them with your colleagues.
  - For more about how to interpret and evaluate frameworks, see: *Introduction to Public Health Ethics 3 - Frameworks for Public Health Ethics* [http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/Publications.ccnpps?id\\_article=1426](http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/Publications.ccnpps?id_article=1426)
  - Send us a note: perhaps we could help you to find or to develop resources that are suited to your particular workplace and interests in PH.

# Questions and discussion




Image: *Two men contemplating the Moon*, by Caspar David Friedrich, ca. 1825-30.  
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# Resources



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# Here are a few principles that are commonly used in public health ethics frameworks:

Substantive		Procedural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Duty to provide care</li><li>• Effectiveness</li><li>• Equity / social justice</li><li>• Harm principle</li><li>• Least restrictive means</li><li>• Necessity</li><li>• Precautionary principle</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proportionality</li><li>• Protection of the public</li><li>• Reciprocity</li><li>• Respect</li><li>• Solidarity</li><li>• Sustainability</li><li>• Stewardship</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Accountability</li><li>• Inclusiveness</li><li>• Participation</li><li>• Reasonableness</li><li>• Responsibleness</li><li>• Responsiveness</li><li>• Transparency</li></ul>

**Substantive:** these can help to reveal ethical issues and to make and justify decisions in specific contexts.

**Procedural:** these can help in making ethical choices concerning the processes by which programs, policies etc. are realized.

For further information: Please send us an email and we can refer you to several interesting resources. Or, you can find these by consulting the frameworks that are listed on the next three slides.

# Links to selected frameworks for public health ethics

(these are also a good source for learning about normative principles)

- Baylis, F., Kenny, N. P., & Sherwin, S. (2008). A relational account of public health ethics. *Public Health Ethics*, 2008, 1-14. Available at: <http://noveltechethics.ca/files/pdf/259.pdf>
- Childress, J. F., Faden, R. R., Gaare, R. D., Gostin, L. O., Kahn, J., Bonnie, R. J., Kass, N. E., Mastroianni, A. C., Moreno, J. D., & Nieburg, P. (2002). Public Health Ethics: Mapping the Terrain. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 30 (2), 169–177. Available at: [http://www.virginia.edu/ipe/docs/Childress\\_article.pdf](http://www.virginia.edu/ipe/docs/Childress_article.pdf)
- Fry, C. (2007). *Making values and ethics explicit: a new code of ethics for the Australian alcohol and other drugs field*. Canberra: Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia. Available at: [http://www.adca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ethics\\_code.pdf](http://www.adca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/ethics_code.pdf)
- Kass, N. E. (2001). An ethics framework for public health. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(11), 1776–1782. Available at: <http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/pdf/10.2105/AJPH.91.11.1776>
- Marckmann, G., Schmidt, H., Sofaer, N., & Strech, D. (2015). Putting public health ethics into practice: A systematic framework. *Frontiers in Public Health*, February 2015, 3(23), 8 pp. Available at: <http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpubh.2015.00023/full>

# Selected frameworks (cont.)

New Zealand Ethics Advisory Committee. (2007). *Getting through together: Ethical values for a pandemic*. Wellington: Ministry of Health. Available at:

<http://neac.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/getting-through-together-jul07.pdf>

Public Health Leadership Society. (2002). *Principles of the ethical practice of public health*. Available at:

<http://www.phls.org/home/section/3-26/>

Selgelid, M. J. (2009). A moderate pluralist approach to public health policy and ethics. *Public Health Ethics*, 2 (2), 195–205. Available at: <http://phe.oxfordjournals.org/content/2/2/195.full.pdf+html>

Tannahill, A. (2008). Beyond evidence—to ethics: a decision-making framework for health promotion, public health and health improvement. *Health Promotion International*, 23 (4), 380-390. Available at:

<http://heapro.oxfordjournals.org/content/23/4/380.full.pdf+html>

ten Have, M., van der Heide, A., Mackenbach, J., & de Beaufort, I. D. (2012). An ethical framework for the prevention of overweight and obesity: A tool for thinking through a programme's ethical aspects. *European Journal of Public Health*, 23(2), 299-305. Available at:

<http://ejournals.ebsco.com/Direct.asp?AccessToken=46BYKY58K92PJ5PC2PB125J5YJK181CB6&Show=Object&msid=604035520>

# Selected frameworks (cont.)

Thompson, A. K., Faith, K., Gibson, J. L., & Upshur, R. E. G. (2006). Pandemic influenza preparedness: An ethical framework to guide decision-making. *BMC Medical Ethics*, 7(12). Available at: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6939/7/12>

Upshur, R. E. G. (2002). Principles for the justification of public health intervention. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 93 (2), 101-103. Available at: <http://journal.cpha.ca/index.php/cjph/article/view/217>

Willison, D., Ondrusek, N., Dawson, A., Emerson, C., Ferris, L., Saginur, R., Sampson, H., & Upshur, R. E. G. (2012). *A framework for the ethical conduct of public health initiatives*. Public Health Ontario. Available at: <http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/PHO%20%20Framework%20for%20Ethical%20Conduct%20of%20Public%20Health%20Initiatives%20April%202012.pdf>

# References

- Beauchamp, T. L. & Childress, J. F. (1994). *Principles of biomedical ethics*, Fourth edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Callahan, D. & Jennings, B. (2002). Ethics and public health: Forging a strong relationship. *American Journal of Public Health*, 92(2), 169-76.
- Dawson, A. (2010a). Public health ethics: Three dogmas and a cup of hemlock. *Bioethics*, 24(5), 218-225.
- Dawson, A. (2010b). Theory and practice in public health ethics: A complex relationship. In S. Peckham & A. Hann (Eds.), *Public Health Ethics and Practice*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Gostin, L. (2001). Public health, ethics, and human rights: A tribute to the late Jonathan Mann. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 29, 121-130.
- Krishnan, M. (2013, February 9). Are anti-fluoridation activists coming to your town? *Maclean's Magazine*. Retrieved on March 10, 2015 from: <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/something-in-the-water/> (Quotation drawn from readers' comments section following the article.)
- McDougall, C. & Gauvin, F.-P. (2010). Public engagement to inform ethically challenging public health policies: Approaches, evidence and insights. Montréal: National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy. Retrieved from: [http://www.ncchpp.ca/128/Presentations.ccnpps?id\\_article=449](http://www.ncchpp.ca/128/Presentations.ccnpps?id_article=449)
- Nixon, S. (2005). Critical public health ethics and Canada's role in global health. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 97(1), 32-34.
- Toronto Public Health. (2014). Fluoride & Drinking Water. Retrieved from: <http://www1.toronto.ca/City%20Of%20Toronto/Toronto%20Public%20Health/Dental%20and%20Oral%20Health/Files/pdf/F/Fluoride%20Fact%20Sheet%20Aug%202014%20final.pdf>





# NCCHPP Publications in Ethics

## Recent publications:

Introduction to Public Health Ethics 1: Background  
[http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/Publications.ccnpps?id\\_article=977](http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/Publications.ccnpps?id_article=977)

An Introduction to the Ethical Implications of  
Economic Evaluations for Healthy Public Policy  
[http://www.ncchpp.ca/144/Publications.ccnpps?id\\_article=962](http://www.ncchpp.ca/144/Publications.ccnpps?id_article=962)

Methods of Economic Evaluation: What are the  
Ethical Implications for Healthy Public Policy?  
[http://www.ncchpp.ca/144/Publications.ccnpps?id\\_article=1369](http://www.ncchpp.ca/144/Publications.ccnpps?id_article=1369)

The Principle of Reciprocity: How Can it Inform Public  
Health and Healthy Public Policies?  
[http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/Publications.ccnpps?id\\_article=1340](http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/Publications.ccnpps?id_article=1340)

## Just out this week:

Introduction to Public Health Ethics 2:  
Philosophical and Theoretical Underpinnings  
[http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/publications.ccnpps?id\\_article=1424](http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/publications.ccnpps?id_article=1424)

Introduction to Public Health Ethics 3:  
Frameworks for Public Health Ethics  
[http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/Publications.ccnpps?id\\_article=1426](http://www.ncchpp.ca/127/Publications.ccnpps?id_article=1426)

## To come in 2015:

Solidarity in the Ethics and Practice of Public  
Health: Conceptions, Uses, and Implications

For a project update with our current plans and recent publications, please visit:  
<http://www.ncchpp.ca/126/News.ccnpps>



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# Thanks for joining us

You're interested in this topic?  
Visit us at [www.ncchpp.ca](http://www.ncchpp.ca) for more resources

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