Reviewer’s report

Title: Global Health Ethics: Critical Reflections on an Emerging Field

Version: 0 Date: 16 Jun 2018

Reviewer: Angus Dawson

Reviewer's report:

I must begin by acknowledging my scepticism about the role of scoping/systematic reviews in bioethics. It remains unclear to me how the summary of any literature can help us when the primary focus of bioethics is to address normative questions. However, I will try and set this issue aside and address this paper in its own terms.

I have three general comments:

First, why was the approach of Arksey & O'Malley chosen? No justification is given and it is not clear to me that a method designed for the social science literature as a step towards policy development is relevant as a means of addressing a conceptual issue. This might be one reason why stage 6 has not so far been completed and I am uncertain why such a step (consultation process with stakeholders) would be relevant to addressing the authors' chosen research question (How is 'global health ethics' defined by those using the term or related terms in the literature?). How could stakeholders' views possibly be relevant as a way of answering this particular question? How might stakeholders' views about the literature be relevant to describing how the terms are used?

Second, I don't understand why the literature in the review is framed in terms of a taxonomy of 'levels' (interpersonal, institutional, international and global). This seems odd given the focus is supposed to be 'global health ethics' (the fourth level?). The taxonomy itself seems problematic as the papers don't easily fit the categories (many 'issues' belong to at least two of them) and in the 'discussion' section of the paper the focus is on two influential definitions of 'global health' (not 'global health ethics') and it is unclear how they sit within the proposed four-level taxonomy. How is this taxonomy justified and how is it relevant to GHE?

Third, a point that goes to the heart of the content of the review. Is the focus on the uses of the phrase 'global health ethics' (as suggested by the authors' question) or is it ethical issues that arise in 'global health' (as suggested by the search strategy)? These are quite different things. The paper seems to slide between the two.

I'm afraid that reading this review confirms my scepticism about such reviews. Review the literature by all means (too often this is not done in philosophical work) but then choose the most influential or most important definitions and then focus on them to produce a sound and justified definition of the key term (in this case 'global health ethics' or 'global health' - which ever it is). The place that such an activity could start might be with questions about what we mean by 'global' - is this a spatial term? Does it
correlate with some aspect of social or political interaction? If so, what? How is it related to normative issues? Is the word 'global' a signal about who is required to act? It is not clear to me how this review can even begin to help us with this conceptual work as it does not even answer clearly the relevant descriptive question that is its proposed focus: how is the term GHE used?

The abstract is a bit scrappy in places (e.g. delete 'mirror' ln.2 and 'use a' in.6).

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No

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