

HEALTHCARE & DEMANDS FOR JUSTICE

Ethics: Bioethics (Fall 2014)

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DANIELS ON JUSTICE & EQUALITY

- ▣ Harm of poor health: reduced opportunity range
 - Natural lottery (keep in mind social determinants of health also)

- ▣ To ensure equality of opportunity, just society needs to protect basic healthcare needs (*decent basic minimum*)
 - Otherwise people are *wronged*

JUSTICE: BEGINNING CONSIDERATIONS

“a just distribution is one that well-informed people create for themselves by individual choice, provided that the economic system and the distribution of wealth in the community in which these choices are made are themselves just”

(R. Dworkin 247)

JUSTICE: BEGINNING CONSIDERATIONS

- ▣ *What should the role of government be in guaranteeing healthcare to citizens?*
 - *What are guiding concerns and potential demands for justice on this issue? What are barriers to justice?*
- ▣ **R. Dworkin: Egalitarianism, while respecting public preference**
 - Gov. should “provide the circumstances in which it is fair to ask all citizens to take responsibility for their own lives” (250)

R. DWORKIN'S METHODOLOGY

- ▣ Goal: To determine what level of healthcare a society ought to guarantee for all, as a matter of justice
- ▣ Determine what facets of society prevent many people from receiving adequate healthcare coverage
- ▣ Set up a provisional test for justice that is serviceable for our non-ideal society
 - Establish impartial standpoint
 - Assume free & unsubsidized market

PRUDENT INSURANCE TEST

▣ Idealized community

- Fair distribution of wealth
- Entire public is sufficiently informed on medical technology, health, risks, etc.
- No way of knowing any particular individual's health risks

▣ Idealized agent

- In the prime of life
- Expertise on health matters
- Avg. wealth – income barriers represent average citizen

PRUDENT INSURANCE TEST

- ▣ Finite resources to be allocated
 - Trade-offs with other goods inevitable
 - Prudent agent would not forfeit quality education, security, etc for maximizing health prospects and minimizing all possible risks to self & dependents
- ▣ What nearly everyone would buy as idealized agent → society ought to guarantee (sensitive to changing public preferences)
- ▣ What no one would prudently buy → disservice to justice to demand of society

DISCUSSION

- ▣ *Do you agree with Daniels that individuals have a right to a certain level of healthcare?*

- ▣ *Do you think Dworkin's test serves important ethical values?*
 - *Do you think it would succeed in shaping ethically preferable healthcare coverage policies?*

Questions? Comments?

- Case analysis assignment?
- Anything related to the class this semester?