

## Reviewer's report

**Title:** Pandemic influenza preparedness: an ethical framework to guide decision-making

**Version:** 1 **Date:** 22 December 2005

**Reviewer:** Angela Bate

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Re: 'Pandemic influenza preparedness: an ethical framework to guide decision-making'

Alison K Thompson, Karen Faith, Jennifer L Gibson and Ross EG Upshur  
BMC Medical Ethics Debate

Overall, I think that there are some important messages in this paper and that this would be the appropriate journal for this work. However, as it currently stands, I think that it is too long and perhaps not structured in a way that lends clarity to the arguments being made in the paper. I think that if the following changes were made, it would make for a better paper.

#### - Minor Essential Revisions

1. I do think that a change in the structure would be useful. At the moment, after the background section, the discussion tend to read partly as a introduction to the use of ethics in broader decision-making, partly as a methods section in terms of how the authors developed an ethical framework, and partly as a discussion – reflecting on the use of the ethical framework. It would be useful to make these distinctions more clear. I would suggest a format such as that below. Where you introduce the background and use of ethics, go onto to discuss the development of the framework (essentially the method used), and then present the framework (essentially the results), and finish with lessons (currently titled proposed steps for integrating ethics into pandemic planning) and discussion.

- Background (including the importance of ethics)
- Development of an ethical framework (broken into sub-headings that explicitly draw out the stages – so formation of a working group, review of clinical ethics and public health literature to inform framework development, incorporation of lessons from emergency ethics, evaluation and refinement of the framework)
- The ethical framework
- Lessons for implementing an ethical framework
- Discussion and conclusion (including cultural limitations)

#### - Discretionary Revisions

1. pg 3. the use of the word many in 'many have begun to point out...' I think is too strong as it only refers to 2 papers.
2. pg 4. last paragraph – I think that there need to be a statement about fairness considerations rather than simply a quote (or as well as the quote).
3. pg 5. middle paragraph (start 'while there is a need ...') I am not sure this paragraph adds anything

at this point – it would be better to put it in the discussion at the end especially as you refer to the work that you haven't even introduced yet.

4. in the section 'development of the ethical framework' I think this would benefit from being structured more clearly in terms of the steps undertaken in doing so.

5. pg 9. second paragraph 'some may argue ...' I think this section should go into the discussion.

6. pg 11. 'proposed steps for integrating ethics ...' these read as lessons for developing a framework ...

7. pg 14. 'scope of the ethical framework' I found this section very lengthy and actually a distraction from the main messages that the paper was trying to convey. I think this section could be better incorporated into the discussion and shortened to draw out what the implications are for the framework of focussing on an applied approach.

8. pg 16. the arguments and quotes by Kotalik. I wonder whether these arguments could be used in the background section to set up the paper. i.e. this is where the literature is currently at in terms of ethics and pandemic planning. Kotalik takes a very critical ethics perspective, which whilst important, is also limited in terms of what is needed by decision-makers.

As I pointed out above, most of my comments are related to the presentation and structure of the paper. I am happy with the intellectual content of the paper and think that the issues they raise are important but could be drawn out in a clearer, coherent way.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

i declare that I have no competing interests.