Course material

Course:

Ethics in Emergencies

Video:

2b Central questions in public health research

Concepts (extracted from automatically generated subtitles):

Implementation research. Uptake of a public health measure. Clinical care. Coercive strategies. Fairness of such measures. Community levels. Voluntary measures. Priority setting. Mandatory quarantine of individuals. Healthy people. Extent of risk. Needs of such vulnerable populations. Public health ethics. Public health. Innovative strategies.

to video sequence search
(within Ethics in Emergencies.)

to video



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notes

summary

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Hello, my name is Andreas Reis and I'm the co-lead of the Health Ethics and Governance Unit at the WHO in Geneva. In emergencies, there are often more unknowns about

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interventions than in non-emergency conditions. In this situation, it is important to consider the extent of risk from an intervention that would be acceptable at the individual and community levels in relation to the expected benefit. Especially when it comes to preventive

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interventions, we should remember that these are delivered to healthy people, not patients.

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The risk benefit ratio may therefore be higher than in clinical care. An example here would be exposing some individuals to the risk of a novel vaccination, such that others who

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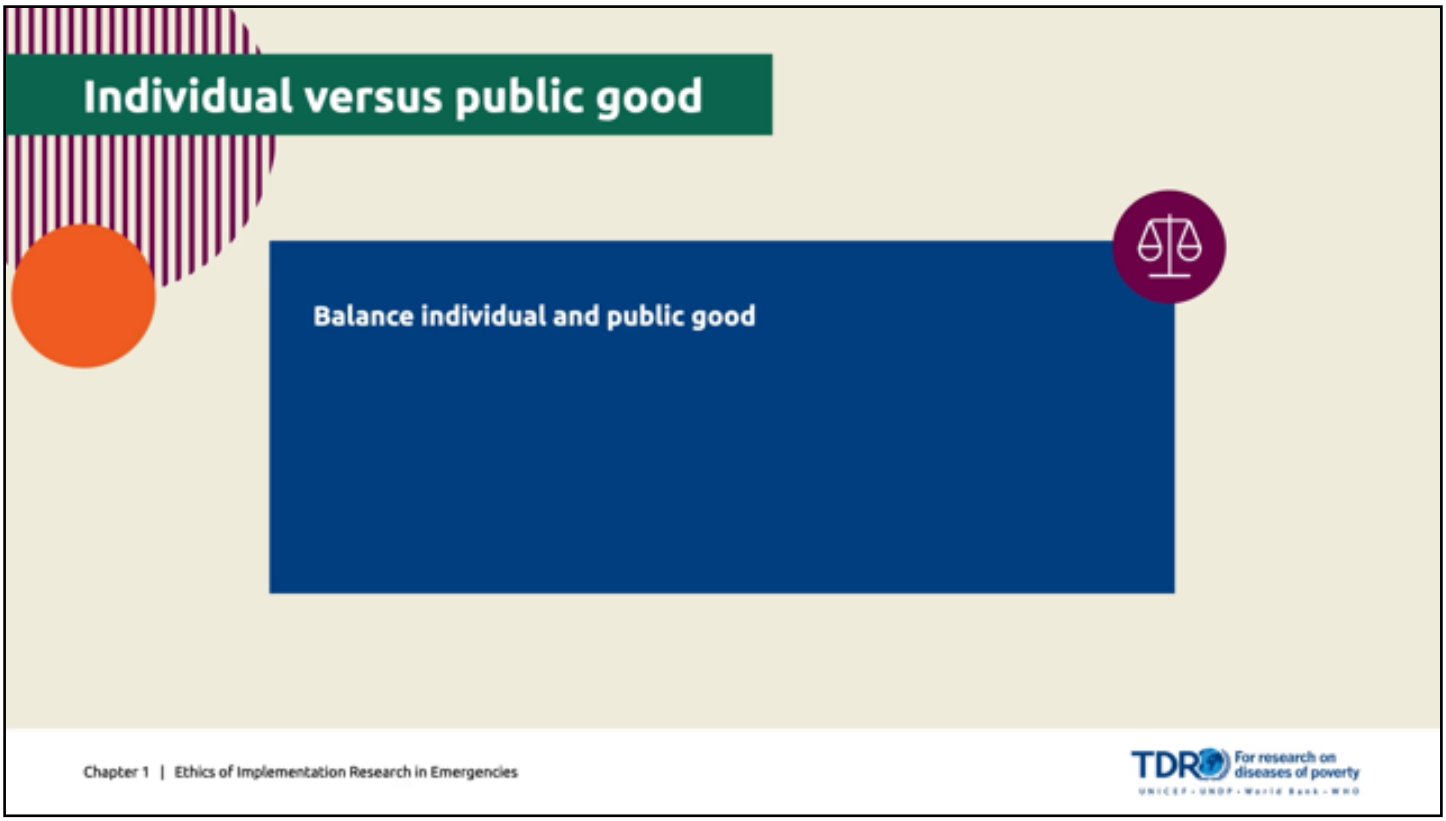


cannot be vaccinated in the community are protected through herd immunity. In implementation research, these considerations are highly relevant for individual informed consent and communicating the unknowns in the context of potential benefits and harms for the

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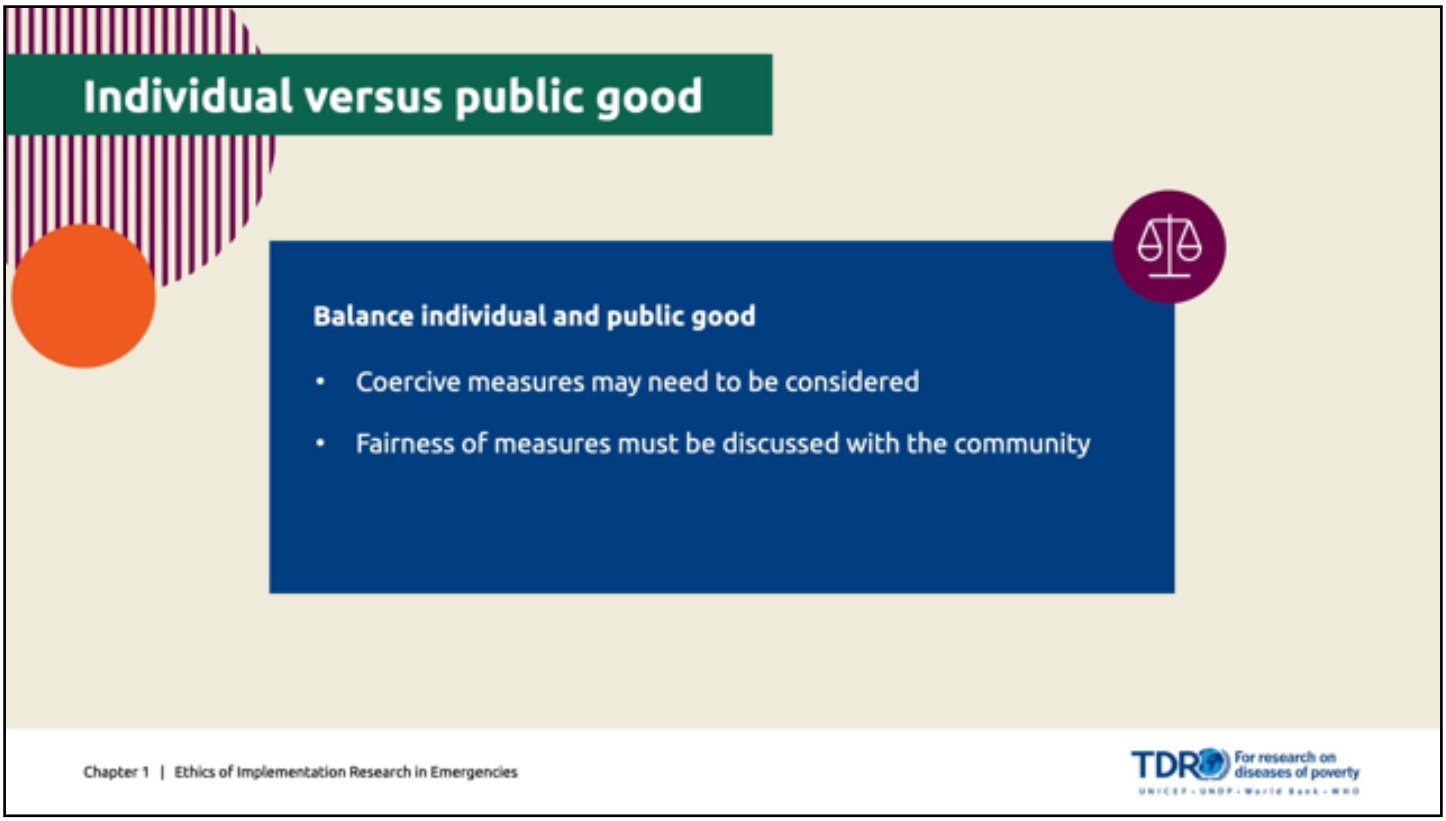


individual and the community. Taking this example further, it is important to balance individual interest versus the common public good to ensure fairness. While

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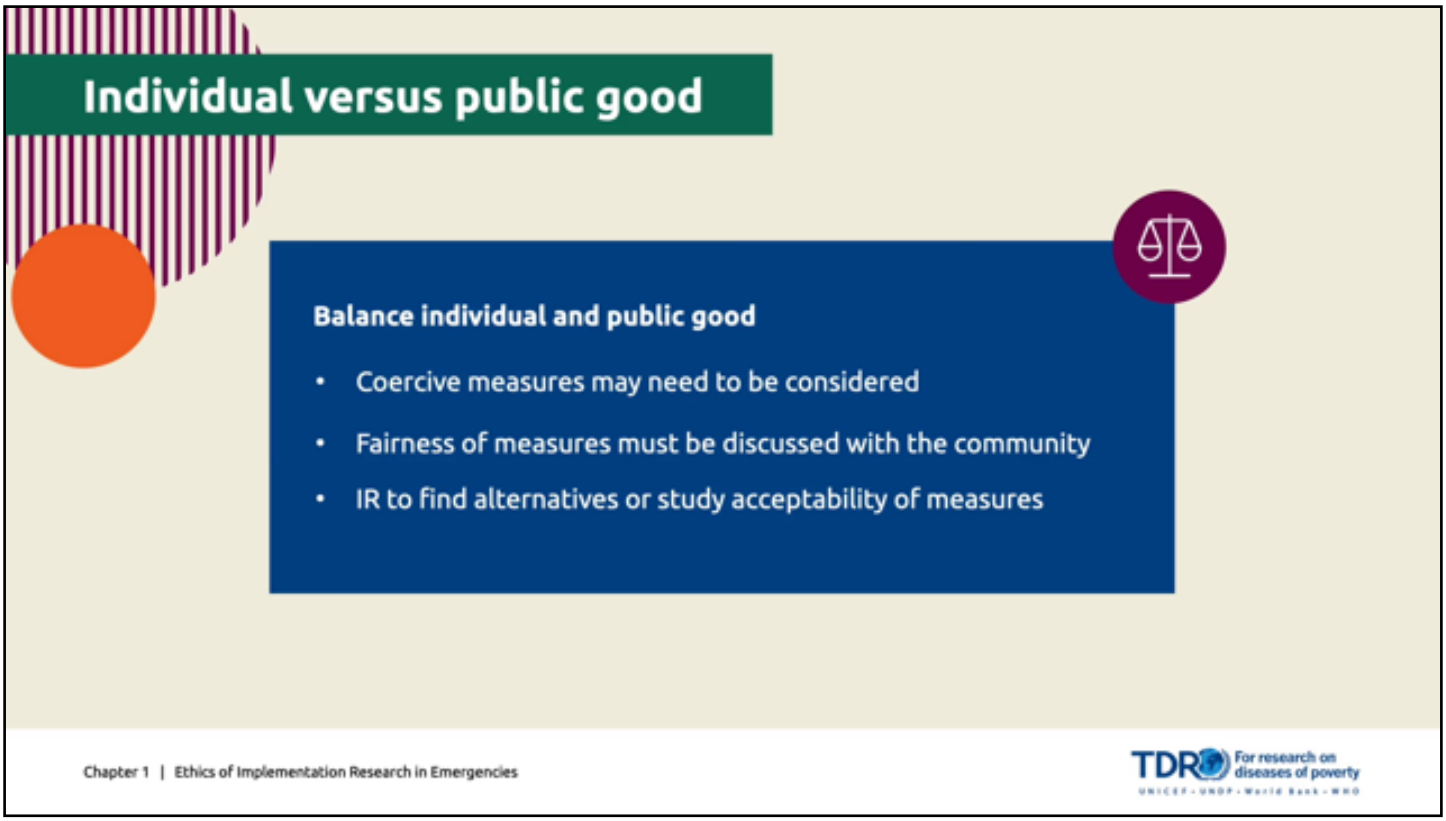


one should always aim for voluntary measures, at times, as a last resort, coercion may need to be considered to improve uptake of a public health measure. For example, if vaccination is made a requirement for a child to attend school, the fairness of such measures must be

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debated and communicated to the community and implementation research may be required to understand the acceptability and feasibility of such measures, or to find alternative, less

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coercive strategies to increase vaccine uptake. Another issue relating to

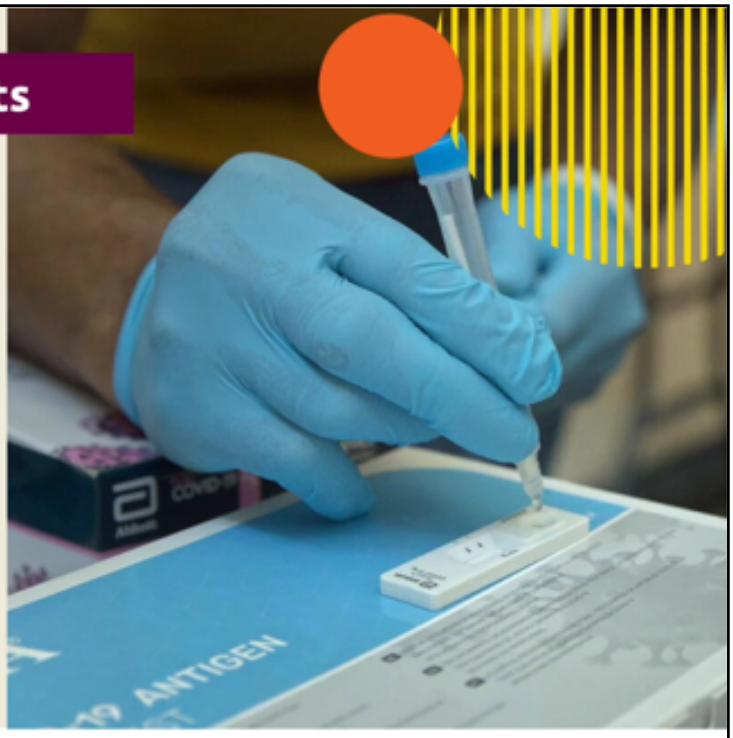
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Accountability of governments

- Government interference with personal choices



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public health ethics that arose frequently during the Covid-19 pandemic was how much the government should or can interfere with personal choices in an emergency, and how individuals or

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2m 13s



communities should hold governments to account for the consequences. Mandatory quarantine of individuals who were exposed to the virus may have caused unintended

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2m 25s

Accountability of governments

- Government interference with personal choices
- Accountability for unintended harm



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harm, for example, for older people living alone who had no one to assist them in getting

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supplies or if they fell ill. Implementation research may be useful to identify

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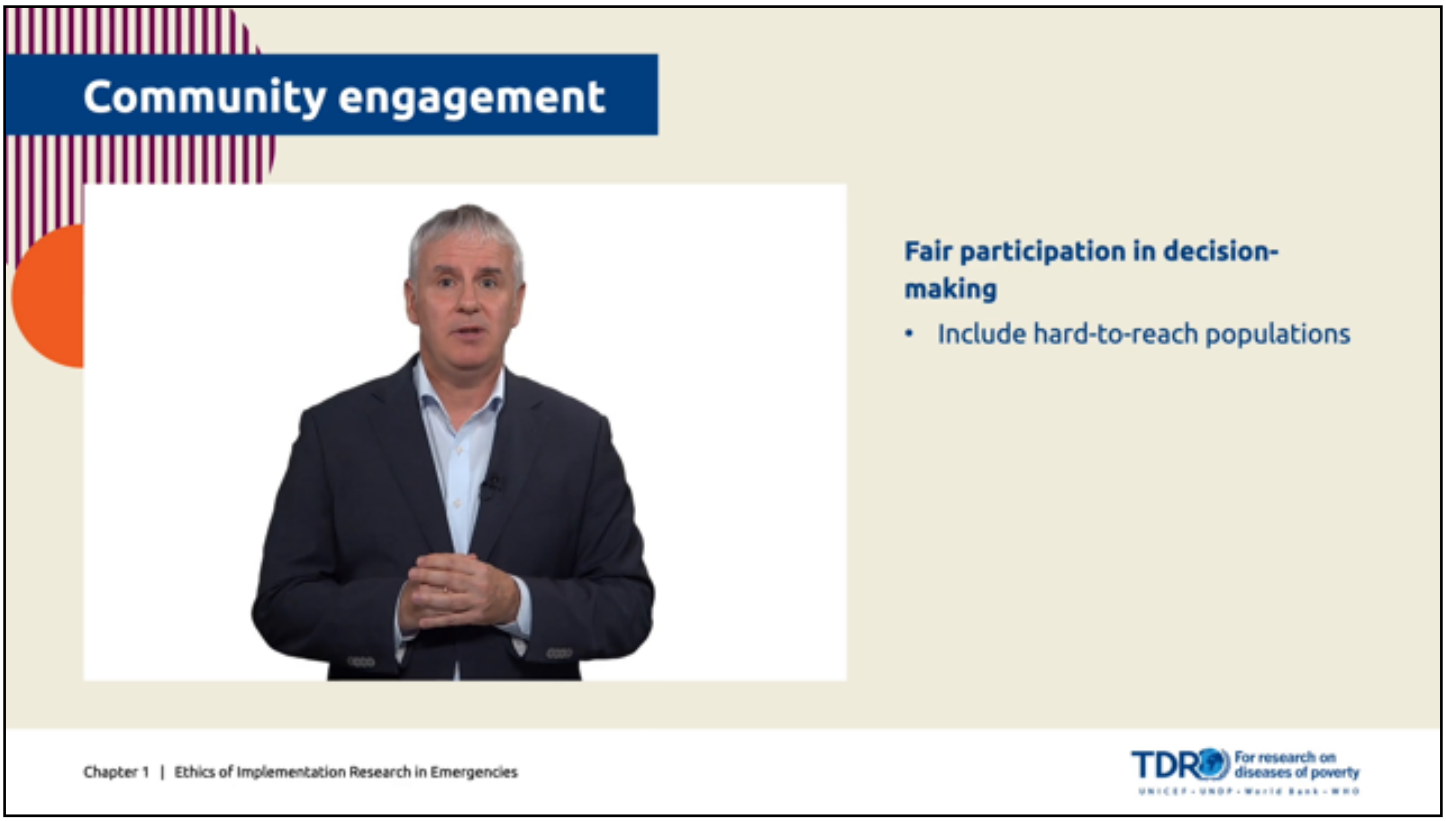


innovative strategies to effectively meet the needs of such vulnerable populations and mitigate potential harms, for example through testing of mobile technologies, if accessible.

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As we can appreciate from these examples, cooperation and understanding are needed from the public, especially during emergencies. Engagement with communities is therefore important in public health to ensure fair participation in decision making, and that all voices of hard-to-reach populations are heard. When thinking about people living with neglected tropical diseases, for example, many are stigmatized because of disfiguring consequences. These

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individuals can very easily be forgotten and left behind in emergencies. Strategies to overcome barriers to prevention and care and ensure inclusiveness are therefore required to optimize public health responsiveness for all, as well as to support research in emergencies.

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Priorities

- Scarcity of resources in emergencies



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Importantly, Given the frequent scarcity of resources in emergencies, priority setting and

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Priorities

- Scarcity of resources in emergencies
- Focus of IR studies must be on priority questions



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rationing may be required. As we witnessed for ICU beds during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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4m 1s

Priorities

- Scarcity of resources in emergencies
- Focus of IR studies must be on priority questions



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Priority setting is similarly important in implementation research in emergencies. To ensure that studies focus on priority questions and research resources are utilised most

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effectively. Finally, in all health related research and practice, privacy and confidentiality must be respected. However, in emergencies and outbreaks, this may not always be possible, such as for individuals in mandatory isolation. Care must be taken by researchers to maximise confidentiality and privacy, and to protect individuals at all times. Thank you very much for your attention.

notes

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