

Ethical Considerations in Epidemiological Research

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1. Introduction

- Epidemiological research must protect the rights and welfare of participants and communities.
- Ethical conduct maintains public trust and the integrity of science.

2. Core Ethical Principles

- **Autonomy:** respecting individuals' right to make informed decisions about participation.
- **Beneficence and non-maleficence:** maximising benefits while minimising harm.
- **Justice:** fair selection of participants and equitable sharing of benefits.

3. Informed Consent

- Participants must understand the study purpose, risks, and benefits before agreeing.
- Consent should be voluntary and free from coercion.

4. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- Personal health data must be kept secure and used only for approved purposes.
- Anonymising data protects privacy when results are published.

5. Oversight and Vulnerable Groups

- **Ethics review boards:** committees that approve and monitor research for ethical compliance.
- Extra safeguards apply to children, prisoners, and other vulnerable populations.

6. Summary

- Ethical epidemiology applies principles of autonomy, beneficence, justice, consent, and confidentiality under independent review to protect participants and communities.