

## **On the incorporation of universal human rights values into an "everyday" healthcare ethics: a spiritual perspective**

### **Author**

1. Ms. Mandy Lee - Trinity College Dublin

### **Abstract**

#### **Background**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in Geneva in December 1948 has been part of a key set of documents framing universal human rights values and informing ethical practices in many spheres. Legal scholars and ethicists have written about how such espoused values may be manifested in health research and practice, and this paper seeks to add to that scholarship by approaching the topic from a spiritual perspective, on the possibility of creating an "everyday healthcare ethics" that reflect our highest principles especially in an era of hi-tech surveillance.

#### **Aim and objectives**

This paper seeks to explore how universal human rights values could be adequately incorporated into healthcare ethics by questioning the deeper assumptions of healthcare research and practice from a spiritual perspective.

#### **Theoretical Perspectives**

In this discussion paper I will explore theories by ethicists and legal scholars on universal human rights values. I build on this overview by outlining the philosophical frameworks showcased in a series of BMJ papers regarding the ideal principles of a health system. I supplement these frameworks by reference to my previous paper on the application of Taoist and existentialist philosophies to healthcare practice.

#### **Discussion Topic**

I utilise the above theoretical perspectives to argue for the universality of universal human rights values, and to re-state their enduring importance to our contemporary societies despite the passage of time. I offer a critique of how such espoused values have often become mere background fodder as opposed to a living part of our healthcare research and practice, using recent examples of egregious lapses. I propose how we could enliven the incorporation of such values into our "everyday healthcare ethics" by engaging in spiritual questioning, offering counter-factuals of how those egregious examples could have been avoided if this deeper questioning was employed.

#### **Conclusions and Implications**

By drawing attention to the "death of values" pervading some of our healthcare research and practice, and showing how deeper spiritual questioning can be used to enliven our everyday healthcare ethics, this paper has implications for how we could conduct healthcare in manners that are in sync with our espoused highest values.