

PERELMAN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA



The Department of Medical Ethics & Health Policy, based in the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine, is one of the world's premier departments for research and education in both medical ethics and health policy. Under the leadership of Drs. Steven Joffe and Harsha Thirumurthy, the Department's distinguished faculty conduct highly impactful scholarship and advise policymakers in the United States and abroad. Our faculty's wide-ranging research has been published in leading journals and recognized by numerous prestigious awards. The Department also hosts three leading master's degree programs: a Master of Bioethics, a Master of Science in Medical Ethics, and an online Master of Health Care Innovation.

Founded in 2011, the Department pioneered the concept of bringing together medical ethics and health policy under one roof. By studying and teaching these fields in an integrated manner, the Department aims to ensure that health policy is ethically sound and that ethical norms have impact through evidence-based policies.



Our Research Areas

- AGING
- BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS
- ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
- ETHICS OF RESOURCE ALLOCATION
- FOOD POLICY
- GLOBAL HEALTH
- HEALTH CARE INNOVATION
- HEALTH CARE POLICY ETHICS
- HEALTH ECONOMICS
- HEALTH EQUITY
- MENTAL HEALTH
- NEUROETHICS
- PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS
- RESEARCH ETHICS
- SCIENCE POLICY

Our Department at a Glance

22

PRIMARY FACULTY

225+

STUDENTS ENROLLED IN OUR MASTER'S PROGRAMS

192

PUBLICATIONS IN 2023

\$16 MILLION

AWARDED SPONSORED RESEARCH FUNDS IN FY22

Our Impact in Medical Ethics

Ezekiel (Zeke) Emanuel, MD, PhD has made enormous contributions to the global response to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. He showed that excess mortality due to COVID-19 was much higher in the US than in peer countries during the year after vaccines became widely available – and that excess mortality was highest in states with low vaccine uptake. He also outlined frameworks for ethical allocation of COVID-19 and MPox vaccines in the face of stark global inequities in health, wealth, and health care.

Holly Fernandez Lynch, JD, MBE is the founder and co-chair of AEREO: The Consortium to Advance Effective Research Ethics Oversight. AEREO brings together almost 100 experts in Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), research ethics, and empirical methods to advance the shared mission of evaluating and improving the effectiveness of systems for protecting human participants in research. She is also one of the world's leading experts on the challenge of balancing rapid access to promising medicines with the need to obtain rigorous evidence

on their safety and effectiveness, with particular attention to the implications of this challenge for regulatory agencies such as the FDA.

Emily Largent, JD, PhD, RN has worked to improve traditional models of medical decision making for adults with diminished cognitive ability, including impairment due to dementia and other causes. Working with affiliated faculty member and geriatrician, Dr. Jason Karlawish, she has outlined the ethical advantages and legal foundations of “supported decision making,” an approach that allows individuals to maintain autonomy for as long as possible while receiving legally recognized assistance from family members or other trusted individuals.

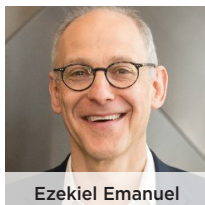
Dominic Sisti, PhD applies the approaches and methods of medical ethics to understand and meet the challenges of mental health care across clinical, research, and policy contexts. His current work addresses the many ethical questions raised by psychedelics, which offer both

promise and peril for the treatment of mental illness. Together with Dr. Anna Wexler, he has highlighted the potential for “Brain Wellness Spas” to misuse psychedelics in ways that lack evidence and that put patients at risk.

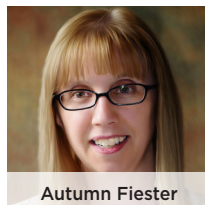
Anna Wexler, PhD is widely recognized as a leading scholar of the ethics of both direct-to-consumer medicine and science and of novel technologies that interface with the human brain. In a recent study of policies of laboratories that offer direct-to-consumer tests, she demonstrated a gap between the promises that many companies make in their marketing materials and the limitations they state in their terms of service. In a separate study of patients who agreed to participate in research conducted during a neurosurgical procedure, she showed that most patients agreed to the research for altruistic reasons and recognized that the research would not benefit them, but few could recall important aspects of informed consent such as the study purpose or the risks of taking part.



Steven Joffe



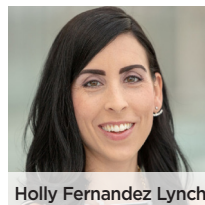
Ezekiel Emanuel



Autumn Fiester



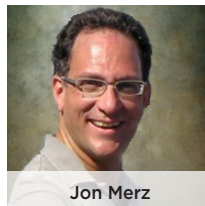
Emily Largent



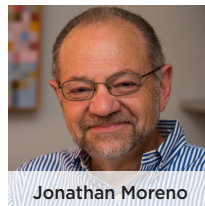
Holly Fernandez Lynch



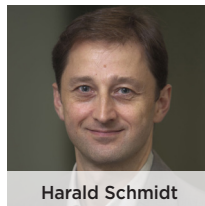
Matthew McCoy



Jon Merz



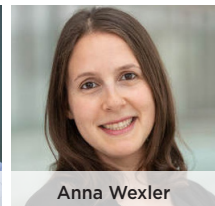
Jonathan Moreno



Harald Schmidt



Dominic Sisti



Anna Wexler

Our Impact in Health Policy



disparities are explained by reduced access to high-quality plans rather than by individual characteristics or enrollment decisions.

Amol Navathe, MD, PhD

is one of the nation's foremost experts on bundled payments as a strategy to reduce health care costs without compromising quality. In a recent study, he found that a bundled payment program for hip and knee joint replacement among beneficiaries in a Medicare Advantage plan was associated with reduced cost and discharge to a skilled nursing facility, without adverse impact on quality metrics. Dr. Navathe currently serves as Vice-Chair for CMS's Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC), advising Congress on critical policy issues related to the nation's health care insurer for the elderly.

Norma B. Coe, PhD leads the Policy and Economics of Disability, Aging, and Long Term Care (PEDAL) Lab, which studies policies related to aging and disability, including insurance design, health care, long-term care, end-of-life care, and Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias. In an award-winning recent study, she showed that members of racial and ethnic minority groups have lower enrollment in high-quality Medicare Advantage plans than White non-Hispanic individuals, but that these

Ravi Parikh, MD, MPP leads the Human Algorithm Collaboration Lab, which aims to integrate artificial intelligence, machine learning, and use of real-world data into patient care - especially cancer care - in an effective and equitable way. He has shown that use of a machine learning algorithm to identify cancer patients at high risk of early death, followed by nudges to patients' clinicians, increased the frequency of serious illness conversations and decreased use of systemic therapy at the end

of life, without significant effects on other end-of-life quality metrics.

Christina Roberto, PhD an expert on food and nutrition policy, directs the Psychology of Eating and Consumer Health (PEACH) Lab. Her research on Philadelphia's "soda tax" demonstrated that taxed beverage purchases dropped by 38% one year after the tax was implemented. A follow up analysis was the first to demonstrate an impact of the tax on a clinically relevant health outcome - dental decay in low-income children. Her research has also examined other policies to promote healthy eating (e.g., food and nutrition labeling) and she has written about strategic science approaches to closing the scholarship-policy gap.

Aaron Schwartz, MD, PhD leads a program of research focused on defining, measuring, and reducing low-value care. He recently demonstrated substantial variation in the frequency of low-value service delivery across Veterans Affairs facilities despite the use of a common payer and shared treatment guidelines and electronic infrastructure. Even at facilities with the lowest use of low-value services, however, he showed substantial opportunity for improvement. This research suggested the need for system-wide rather than targeted efforts to reduce the use of low-value care.

Harsha Thirumurthy, PhD is one of the world's leading authorities on the use of behavioral interventions to improve health in low and middle

Our Impact in Health Policy

income countries (LMICs). In partnership with the University of Witwatersrand's Health Economics and Epidemiology Research Office (HE²RO), he and affiliated faculty member Alison Buttenheim, PhD, MBA, launched Indlela: Behavioural Insights for Better Health, one of the first behavioral economics research units in Africa. In addition, he recently demonstrated the profound benefits of cash transfer programs on both adult and child mortality in LMICs.

Atheendar Venkataramani, MD PhD, founded the Opportunity for Health Lab, devoted to studying the relationship between opportunity - including financial, educational, and social opportunity - and health.

Among his many contributions, he demonstrated marked reduction of food insecurity due to receipt of unemployment insurance during the COVID-19 pandemic and showed that police killings of unarmed black Americans have adverse effects on mental health among black American adults in the general population. He currently co-leads an NIH-funded randomized trial to test whether a multifaceted package of physical,

social, and financial interventions can improve health outcomes for residents of low-income, majority Black areas of Philadelphia.

Kevin Volpp, MD, PhD Director of the Center for Health Incentives and Behavioral Economics (CHIBE), lead-authored a policy statement on behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA) articulating the state of the science underlying

"Food is Medicine," which proposes that health care institutions should provide health food to patients as part of the comprehensive management of selected chronic illnesses such as diabetes. He currently serves as Research Lead for the AHA's Food is Medicine Initiative. He is also a renowned scientist who has led seminal studies that apply behavioral economics insights to health.



Harsha Thirumurthy



Alon Bergman



Norma Coe



Ezekiel Emanuel



Laura Gibson



Sophia Hua



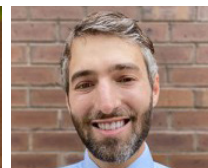
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