The growth of Global Health programs in U.S. universities has dramatically increased the need for attention to the ethical dimensions of international practice, education, and research in health care, particularly with regard to work in developing countries. A central tenet of contemporary ethical guidelines for international work is that sponsors from upper-income countries have an obligation to help developing countries build infrastructure for local administrative control. Such local control ideally includes priority setting, oversight of international programs, and ethical review of externally-sponsored research.

The NIH’s Fogarty International Center, which sponsors the world’s largest program in ethics education and curriculum development for lower- and middle-income countries, has been charged with “moral imperialism” by ethicists in Latin America. Ethics scholars in the U.S. have also observed imperialistic tendencies in international ethics programs. This presentation will explore contemporary ethical standards for international research, practice, and education in biomedicine and public health, and consider the practical, ethical, and political challenges that face efforts at capacity building in developing countries.

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