

Trust Me: New Challenges in Conflict, Advocacy, and Social Commitment

American College of Epidemiology

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Ethics Programs

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I think we agree,
the past is over.

George W. Bush

Conflicts of Interest

- **Financial**
 - Sponsorship
 - Employment
 - Ownership
- **Professional**
 - Publication and authorship
 - Study recruitment
 - Career advancement

Conflicts of Commitment

- Political
- Moral
- Social
- Personal

Policymaking vs. Advocacy

- Lack coherent conceptual analysis
- Distinction without a difference?
 - Role of expertise
 - Management of competing experts
- Can policy be objective?
- Can advocacy be objective? *Ought* it be?

Justifications for Advocacy

- “Heroes of epidemiology” argument
- Everyone’s doing/always done it
- There is a moral duty to deploy expertise in the service of public health
- Epidemiology codes of ethics promote advocacy

ACE Ethics Guidelines

2.11.2 Public health advocacy

In confronting public health problems, epidemiologists sometimes act as advocates on behalf of members of affected communities. Advocacy should not impair scientific objectivity.

ACE Ethics Guidelines [2]

3.11. Obligations to Communities

... In confronting public health problems, epidemiologists sometimes act as advocates on behalf of affected communities. Care must be taken to ensure that such advocacy does not impair scientific impartiality ... Indeed, epidemiologists who advocate should be open to the possibility of changing their views as new evidence or other relevant information becomes available...

“Advocacy” vs. “advocacy”

- Promote overarching goals
- Advocate for uncontroversial positions
- Endorse views on topics with little or no rational disagreement
- Advocate for positions that enjoy broad epistemic agreement

... *OR* ...

“Advocacy” vs. “advocacy” [2]

- Take stands on public health controversies
- Advocate for positions shaped by conflicting evidence
- Promote positions, policies, interventions, etc. aligned with specific political, moral, social views and values

Abortion and breast cancer

Increased Risk Found [Epidemiology 2000](#)

[Jan;11\(1\):76-80](#)[Eur J Cancer 1999](#)
[Sep;35\(9\):1361-7](#)[Oncol Nurs Forum 1997](#)
[Jul;24\(6\):1025-31](#)[J Natl Cancer Inst 1996](#)
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[Health 1996 Oct;50\(5\):481-96](#)[Am J](#)
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[80](#)[JAMA 1996 Jan 24-31; 275\(4\):283-7](#)[Br J](#)
[Cancer 1995 Sep;72\(3\):744-51](#)[Int J Cancer](#)
[1995 Apr 10;61\(2\):181-4](#)[Cancer Causes](#)
[Control 1995 Jan;6\(1\):75-82](#)[J Natl Cancer](#)
[Inst. 1994 Nov 2;86\(21\):1569-70](#)[J Med](#)
[Assoc Ga 1994 Apr;83\(4\):209-10](#)[Cancer](#)
[Detect Prev 1994; 18\(1\):51-5](#)[Acta Med](#)
[Port 1993 Mar-Apr;6\(3-4\):129-33](#)[Int J](#)
[Cancer 1993 Jan 21;53\(2\):215-9](#)[Int J](#)
[Epidemiol 1989 Jun;18\(2\):300-4](#)[Br J](#)
[Cancer 1988 Jul;58\(1\):99-104](#)[Br J Cancer](#)
[1986 Feb;53\(2\):281-4](#)[Br J Cancer 1983](#)
[Jun;47\(6\):757-62](#)[Breast Cancer Res Treat](#)
[1982;2\(1\):5-73](#)[Br J Cancer 1981](#)
[Jan;43\(1\):72-6](#)[Int J Epidemiol 1977](#)
[Dec;6\(4\):365-73](#)

No Increased Risk Found [Int J Cancer 2001](#)

[Jun 15;92\(6\):899-905](#)[Cancer Causes](#)
[Control 2000 Oct;11\(9\):777-](#)
[81](#)[Epidemiology 2000 Mar;11\(2\):177-](#)
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[Aug;89\(8\):1244-7](#)[Br J Cancer 1999](#)
[Apr;79\(11-12\):1923-8](#)[Obstet Gynecol](#)
[Surv 1998 Nov;53\(11\):708-14](#)[Ugeskr](#)
[Laeger 1998 Aug 31;160\(36\):5178-82](#)[Int](#)
[J Cancer 1998 Apr 13;76\(2\):182-](#)
[8](#)[Cancer Causes Control 1997](#)
[Nov;8\(6\):841-9](#)[N Engl J Med 1997 Jan](#)
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[Sep;7\(5\):521-8](#)[Int J Cancer 1996 Feb](#)
[8;65\(4\):401-5](#)[Cancer Causes Control](#)
[1995 Sep;6\(5\):460-8](#)[Br J Cancer 1994](#)
[Jul;70\(1\):129-32](#)[Int J Cancer 1991 Jul](#)
[30;48\(6\):816-20](#)[BMJ 1989 Dec](#)
[9;299\(6713\):1430-2](#)[Am J Epidemiol](#)
[1988 May;127\(5\):981-9](#)[Am J Epidemiol](#)
[1987 Nov;126\(5\):831-41](#)[Int J Epidemiol](#)
[1987 Sep;16\(3\):347-55](#)[Int J Epidemiol](#)
[1985 Mar;14\(1\):70-4](#)[Gan No Rinsho](#)
[1984 Jun;30\(7\):777-84](#)[Br J Cancer 1982](#)
[Mar;45\(3\):327-31](#)[Jugosl Ginekol Opstet](#)
[1979 Sep-Dec;19\(5-6\):237-47](#)

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<http://www.a-zbreastcancer.com/articles/aabortion2.htm>

Special issues

- Information technology (public health informatics)
- Occupational and environmental health
- Molecular epidemiology
- Screening and surveillance (*varia*)

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Something Went Wrong in Jet Crash, Expert Says

Police Begin Campaign to Run Down Jaywalkers

Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over

Teacher Strikes Idle Kids

Miners Refuse to Work after Death

Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant

War Dims Hope for Peace

If Strike Isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last Awhile

Cold Wave Linked to Temperatures

Enfield Couple Slain; Police Suspect Homicide

Red Tape Holds Up New Bridges

Man Struck By Lightning Faces Battery Charge

New Study of Obesity Looks for Larger Test Group

Kids Make Nutritious Snacks

Chef Throws His Heart into Helping Feed Needy

Hospitals are Sued by 7 Foot Doctors