

# Research ethics in the context of humanitarian emergencies

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## Abstract

Research is needed to make responses to disasters and humanitarian emergencies more evidence-based. Such research must also adhere to the generally accepted principles of research ethics. While research into health interventions used in disasters raises distinctive ethical concerns, seven ethical principles developed for Clinical research are applied here to disaster research. Practical examples from disaster settings are used to demonstrate how these ethical principles can be applied.

This reveals that research ethics needs to be seen as much more than a mechanism to obtain ethical approval for research. Research ethics involves ethical principles and governance frameworks, but must also consider the role of ethical virtues in research. Virtues are essential to ensure that researchers do what they believe is ethically right and resist what is unethical. Research ethics that truly protects participants and promotes respect needs to include training in ethical virtues to ensure disaster research is carried out to the highest ethical standards. This article is based on a presentation at the Evidence Aid Symposium on 20 September 2014, in Hyderabad, India.

## Keywords

Research ethics; humanitarian emergencies; disasters; ethical principles; virtue ethics