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Functional Genomics for Emerging Infectious Diseases (PREPARE)

Integrated GE³LS Research

Understanding the Role of Experts in Risk Communication

GE³LS Project Leaders

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Summary

The GE³LS component of this project is interested in understanding the role of experts in risk communication, an area of research that has been under-explored. GE³LS researchers, Drs. Valia Lestou and Katayoon Riyazi will draw on their cross disciplinary backgrounds to help address the issues raised by the Canadian public regarding these innovative technologies. They have two key research objectives:

1. To investigate how experts make choices about communicating health risks before and during health crises. This will allow us to understand how scientists communicate scientific evidence to each other and policy-makers, how such information is translated into public health policy, and how and what information is communicated to the public.
2. To conduct a comparative ethical analysis of antiviral and vaccine priority in pandemic influenza plans. Here the aim is to understand the perspectives of health care workers and the public on a range of ethical issues, such as the duty to care and allocation of resources during health crises.

The research will bring together issues around science, health policy and ethics and will be critical in defining the emerging field of 'Public Health Ethics' in Canada. The knowledge gained from this research will be indispensable for establishing ethical and effective risk communications strategies and for ultimately fostering dialogue and improving the relationship between scientists, policy-makers and the lay public before and during crisis situations. <http://www.genomebc.ca/ethics/research/activities/prepare.htm>