

ROLES OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND PRIVATE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE 2017-2018 LISTERIOSIS EPIDEMIC IN SOUTH AFRICA: AN ETHICAL CONJECTURE

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Abstract - Academic paper.

The aim of the current article is to provide some ethical reflections and perspectives on the progression and aftermath of the 2017-2018 listeriosis epidemic, or disaster in South Africa. This links the context of the listeriosis epidemic/disaster to the overall public health systems, disaster medicine and ethics in South Africa, with specific focus on standards of public service and private stakeholder conduct in the country. The public service angle is unpacked in terms the policy framework relevant to ethics and public health/disaster management. In addition, the process, and ethical implications of the management, as well as the role of the various stakeholders, in the 2017-2018 listeriosis epidemic/disaster in South Africa are analysed and reflected upon. Results of the current study indicate that actions of the public health officials and biomedical scientists, who investigated the listeriosis epidemic/disaster as public servants, were executed in line with the code of conduct of the public service in South Africa. The relevant public service legislation and ethical norms of the public service in South Africa were also adhered to. A slightly different approach was discovered in the conduct of the ready-to-eat meat producer that had owned the factory which was identified as the source of the listeriosis epidemic/disaster. The narrative of online resources indicates that there were many negative outcomes of the 2017-2018 listeriosis epidemic/disaster in South Africa. Those were stories about negative outcomes of the epidemic that impacted individuals, who were listeriosis sufferers. Their voices and their stories' representation provide an important resource of data on the impacts on the complex disasters on the South African population. Novel approaches are proposed to address the challenges identified along the public-private goods continuum and approaches to food production and access to sources of dietary protein in South Africa.

Keywords: ethics, consensus decision-making, aetiology of inherited inequalities

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