

Commentary to "Ethicizing the Ebola Epidemic"

Rachel Hill

Commentary, Ebola, Bioethics

INTRODUCTION

The author introduces two key issues of the Ebola epidemic very clearly. However, the author could elaborate further on the objections to using experimental drugs. The author does a very good job of enumerating the reasons for using these drugs (that there is no alternative and that harm is already being done to those infected). In terms of reasons against using the drugs, the author only writes that there are regulations in place that are usually followed. Several supporting facts are given to suggest different regulations should be put in place for a crisis like Ebola. Ebola is a deadly disease with no cure. At present, all we have are these experimental drugs. Ordinarily, such drugs would not be given without extensive testing. However, in this case, there is no time for that to be done. People who contract Ebola have no other alternatives, so an unapproved experimental treatment is better than nothing at all. It is important to weigh the risks and benefits.

ANALYSIS

Some may argue that the risks of using an experimental drug may be too great and that we should wait to administer any experimental drug until it has been proven safe. We do not know what the long-term side effects may be. While that argument may be appropriate for other situations, in the case of Ebola epidemic, I do not think it applies. As I have said, and as the author has said, there is no cure or other treatment available for Ebola. People who contract it will likely die of the disease and these experimental treatments are their only option. In this case, the benefits outweigh the risks.

CONCLUSION

As the author mentions, access to these drugs is very problematic. However, they do not elaborate enough on both sides of the issue. There are reasons supporting and reasons against giving health care workers experimental treatments first and I think including them would have added to the depth of the argument presented here.