

Vilhjalmur Arnason "The Personal is Political: Ethics of Personalized Medicine"

It is argued that the ethical questions and challenges raised by the project of personalizing medicine are not sufficiently addressed without considering the possible effects of personalizing medicine on our system of health care. I argue that the framing of the ethical issues in light of the main principles of bioethics, such as autonomy, welfare and even justice, tends to be too narrow and the larger social implications thus be neglected. Among the possible unintended consequences of the project to increase personal responsibility for health is reduced emphasis on the social determinants of health for which we are jointly responsible. This poses important challenges for bioethics which calls for a closer attention to biopolitics and the social context of bioethical discourse. The conclusion is that the benefits or damage that might result from personalizing medicine will depend no less upon political and policy decisions than on pharmacogenomic developments.