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# BRAINSTORM

**An interdisciplinary and bilingual newsletter about advances in health ethics theory and practice**



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Volume: 13, Issue: 9

## Monthly profile

### Julie M. Robillard, Ph.D.

Dr. Julie Robillard is an Assistant Professor of Neurology at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Scientist in Patient Experience at BC Children's and Women's Hospital (C&W) and faculty member of Neuroethics Canada. Dr. Robillard holds a PhD in Neuroscience and completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship under the supervision of Dr. Judy Illes at Neuroethics Canada.



Dr. Robillard leads the [Neuroscience, Engagement and Smart Tech \(NEST\) lab](#), where her program of research focuses on the development and evaluation of novel technologies to support brain health across the lifespan. She recently secured an inaugural New Frontiers in Research grant to investigate emotional alignment in social robotics. Through international interdisciplinary collaborations, she is exploring co-creation processes, development and applications of social robots in both older adult and youth populations.

Dr. Robillard holds provincial, national and international leadership roles: she is Chair of the [Ethical, Legal, Social Implications Cross-cutting Program](#) of the Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging, Lead of the [Ethics and Practice Program](#) of the AGE-WELL NCE, and Vice-chair of the [Technology and Dementia Executive Committee](#) of the International Society to Advance Alzheimer's Research and Treatments, among others.

### Addressing the ethics of novel technologies through co-creation

Social robots, defined as robots with a goal of providing assistance to human users through social interaction, are promising in their potential to support brain health across the lifespan. Recent systematic reviews of controlled trials analyzing the impact of social robots on well-being suggest that these devices can significantly improve quality of life outcomes, including reducing loneliness, stress and anxiety.

Despite these benefits, real-world implementation of social robots has been slow. Barriers

to adoption include lack of end-user input in the design and development of these solutions, overly optimistic expectations about the capabilities of robots, lack of emotional alignment between social robots and their end-users, and ethical concerns such as infantilization, deception and privacy.

Close and collaborative engagement with end-users can be instrumental in addressing the ethical challenges of emerging technologies such as social robots in the design and development stages. Key insights that can be gathered through engagement include, for example, the determination of how closely the device or application intersects with end-user values, whether stated or implicit – a factor that has been shown to be important for adoption. Consultation with end-users can also inform the dynamic monitoring of the balance between benefits and risks of a given social robot application over the course of the lifespan or of age-associated conditions such as dementia. End-users can also contribute valuable expertise in addressing the constant tension between protecting the rights of end-users versus over-protecting them. This tension is especially salient as health care ethics as field is increasingly shifting away from paternalism as a governing principle. Inclusive, meaningful and participatory end-user engagement is essential to proactively identify and address ethical issues in health technology research and development.

### **Selected publications**

**Robillard, J.M., Cleland, I., Hoey, J., Nugent, C.** (2018) [Ethical adoption: a new imperative in the development of technology for dementia](#). *Alzheimer's & Dementia* 14(9):1104-13.

Kabacinska, K., **Robillard, J.M.** (2020) [Realizing the potential of robotics for aging care through co-creation](#). *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* 76(2):461-66.

Prescott, T.J., **Robillard, J.M.** (2020) Are friends electric? The benefits and risks of human-robot relationships. In Press, *iScience*.

### **Websites**

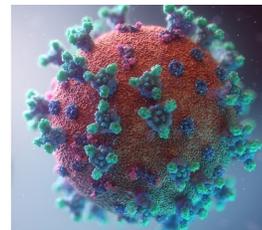
[Neuroscience, Engagement and Smart Tech \(NEST\) Lab](#)

[Neuroethics Canada](#)

## **Health ethics and the COVID-19 pandemic**

### **Recent and relevant literature**

A list of the most recent and relevant health ethics scholarly publications relating to the COVID-19 response is available on [our website](#).



### **Events and announcements**

**[Call for registration: Online seminar - Disrupting ableism with artful activism](#)**

**Part 3 of the online event series “The Art of Flourishing: Conversations on Disability”**

**December 7, 2020 (3p.m. EST), The Hastings Center, Garrison, New York, United States**

What will it take to bring about lasting justice for disabled people in the United States? When will every body—and every voice—be indispensable? Poets and activists Lateef McLeod and D.J. Savarese imagine a society led by people with disabilities and show how disabled communities are already building this world through creative forms of resistance. (ASL & captioning provided)

**[Call for applications: Clinical ethicist](#)**

**Centre for Applied Ethics, McGill University Health Centre, Montréal, Canada**

The Centre for Applied Ethics (CAE) of the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC), Montréal, Canada is currently looking for outstanding candidates in applied health ethics to join its ranks as a clinical ethicist (mid-level position, with an emphasis on clinical ethics consultations and organizational ethics across 5 adult and 1 pediatric tertiary and quaternary care sites). By joining the growing team of hospital-based ethics professionals, you will help further the MUHC's vision of providing exceptional and integrated patient-centered care and conducting cutting-edge research that meets the highest ethical standards. Established in 2014, the CAE provides clinical, organizational, and research ethics consultations and training to support all stakeholders to make decisions and adopt practices that are in keeping with the hospital's mission and values. In addition, members of the CAE play key roles on the institution's Research Ethics Board – one of the busiest in the country! The successful candidate will have the unique opportunity to work with a team of seasoned professional ethicists to dynamically implement an innovative and integrated vision of applied ethics in both the pediatric and adult context.

**[Call for abstracts: Hindsight, insight and foresight is 20/20](#)**

**2021 conference of the Canadian association for health services and policy research, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada**

**Week of May 17, 2021 (confirmed dates coming soon)**

Abstracts have to be submitted for one of four formats: 1) Oral presentation: standard; 2) Oral presentation: embedded research – program and policy initiatives; 3) Poster presentation; 4) Panel presentation. See the Abstract submission guidelines linked above for details. To submit an abstract, click [here](#).

**Deadline for submission:** January 22, 2021

**[Call for registration: Online seminar - Key concerns for critical disability studies in Covid-19 times](#)**

**February 1, 2021 (7a.m. – 8:30a.m. EST)**

**[iHuman](#), a new, ground breaking institute at the University of Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England.**

iHuman presents this online seminar with Dan Goodley, Rebecca Lawthom, Kirsty Liddiard and Katherine Runswick-Cole. While acknowledging the centrality of Covid-19 - and the threat this poses to the mind-bodies, politics, and everyday realities of disabled people – the speakers foreground some preoccupations, ideas and debates emerging from within the field of disability studies. To register, [click here](#).

**[Call for papers and labs: ASA 2021 virtual conference on responsibility](#)**

**Between March 29 and April 1, 2021.**

**Association of Social Anthropologists of the United Kingdom and Department of Social Anthropology at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, United Kingdom**

As the conference was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the existing selection of panels and papers remains, but they have launched a new round of calls for those who perhaps missed the initial calls. The Call for Panels has closed, but the Call for Labs and Papers will run from 30 November to 21 December.

**Deadline for submission:** December 21, 2020.

**[Call for registration: Annual ICCEC conference: "Beyond borders: exploring new frontiers"](#)**

**From April 13 to April 16, 2021.**

**The Centre for Medical Ethics and Law, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University, South Africa**

The conference will take on a hybrid format with a strong virtual component. The conference venue at Spier is set in magnificent landscaped gardens with indoor-outdoor flow at the venue, adequate ventilation, the potential to hold some events outdoors and for all meals and teas to be served outdoors. The Centre for Medical Ethics and Law, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University, is looking forward to hosting the 16th Annual International Conference on Clinical Ethics and Consultation (ICCEC) in Cape Town, South Africa. Given that this is the first time that the ICCEC will be hosted on the

African continent, the theme “Beyond Borders: exploring new frontiers” is apt. The theme is also perfectly aligned with the myriad ethical dilemmas that have emerged during the COVID-19 Pandemic. The conference will explore clinical ethics challenges that traverse borders and shift paradigms in an ever-changing world. It is hoped that the ethical challenges raised by the theme will be of interest to healthcare professionals and scholars, bioethicists, legal scholars, policy makers and health science partners from around the world. For general information please contact Janine Koeries on [janinek@consultus.co.za](mailto:janinek@consultus.co.za). For enquiries or assistance regarding conference registration, please contact Hanri Lennox on [hlennox@consultus.co.za](mailto:hlennox@consultus.co.za). To register, [click here](#).

**[Call for abstracts: APBEN conference: Rethinking bioethics education after 2020](#)**

**From May 27 to May 30, 2021.**

**Deakin University, Australia**

The organizers invite abstract submissions from educators and practitioners in medicine, nursing, optometry, physiotherapy, medical imaging, social work, paramedicine, and other health professions, as well as researchers. The conference themes include: meeting needs for innovation; making space for all peoples and their knowledges; building capacity of educators; role models and marking; and pandemic priorities. [Click here](#) to submit an abstract. Conference registration will open in December.

**Deadline for submission:** Before December 15, 2020.

**[Call for applications: Médecins sans frontières ethics review board officer](#)**

**Médecins sans frontières (MSF) International**

The complete job description can be found on the above link. The location can be at any MSF office. The contract is open-ended and full-time. The starting date is as soon as possible. To apply, [click here](#).

**Deadline for application:** December 10, 2020

## Literature

### Interdisciplinary foundations of health ethics

**[Dialogue as a disruptive discourse oriented toward justice.](#)**

Hope AA, Munro CL. *American Journal of Critical Care*. 2020 Nov 1;29(6):415-417.

**[Getting the price right: How some countries control spending in a fee-for-service system.](#)**

Gusmano MK, Laugesen M, Rodwin VG, Brown LD. *Health Affairs*. 2020 Nov 1;39(11):1867-74.

**[Informed consent in neurosurgery: A systematic review.](#)**

Shlobin NA, Sheldon M, Lam S. *Neurosurgical Focus*. 2020 Nov 1;49(5):E6.

**[Reasons to accept vaccine refusers in primary care.](#)**

Navin MC, Wasserman JA, Opel DJ. *Pediatrics*. 2020 Nov 1.

**[«Répondre à la vulnérabilité»: l'éthique et les CHSLD au temps de la COVID-19.](#)**

Doucet H. *Éthique & Santé*. 2020 Sep 1;17(3):142-6.

### Methodologies and practices in health ethics

**[Transitioning from adolescence to adulthood with autism spectrum disorder: An overview of planning and legal issues.](#)**

Elster N, Parsi K. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*. 2020 Dec;43(4):723-733.

**[Tolerance for ambiguity among medical students: Patterns of change during medical school and their implications for professional development.](#)**

Geller G, Grbic D, Andolsek KM, Caulfield M, Roskovensky L. *Academic Medicine*. 2020 Nov 3.

[US clinicians' experiences and perspectives on resource limitation and patient care during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

Butler CR, Wong SPY, Wightman AG, O'Hare AM. *JAMA Network Open*. 2020 Nov 2;3(11):e2027315.

[Analysis of laboratory reporting practices using a quality assessment of a virtual patient.](#)

Vears DF, Elferink M, Kriek M, Borry P, van Gassen KL. *Genetics in Medicine*. 2020 Oct 30.

[Improving informed consent by enhancing the role of nurses.](#)

Wilkenfeld DA, Campbell G. *Nursing Ethics*. 2020 Oct 28:969733020956375.

## News and social media

[Recommander plutôt qu'imposer la vaccination contre la Covid-19.](#)

Quintal A et Ringuette L. *Le Devoir*. 23 novembre 2020.

[Confiner le gouvernement?](#)

Marcotte J. *La Presse*. 13 novembre 2020.

[Mon frère a droit à la vie.](#)

Laurendeau N. *La Presse*. 8 novembre 2020.

[The \(absent\) ethics of lockdown.](#)

Giubilini A. *The Spectator*. November 7, 2020.

[Public events series: The art of flourishing - conversations on disability.](#)

*The Hastings Center*. Fall 2020.

## Other resources

For more resources on pragmatic health ethics theory and practice, visit our website at <http://www.pragmatichealthethics.ca>.

