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## Three ethical issues in the development of public genetic health policies in Africa

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It is of paramount importance that sensible and prudent public policies for the introduction and management of genetic research, technologies and therapies be adopted for countries on the African continent. The author agrees with Buchanan et al., when they claim that it is “unwise to consider the ethics of genetics only at the individual level. What matters is not merely the ethics of the individual scientist, physician or counselor, but the broader questions of justice, of claims for freedom and for protection from harm and our obligations towards future generations”. What is therefore important is the development of a “public and institutional policy on genetics” that is adopted for the needs of, specifically, the people of Africa. The author delineates three such issues and indicates some moral aspects that accompany their understanding as well as the challenges that they pose. The three issues are: The kinds of genetic technologies that are appropriate for African needs, The lessons about public health policy to be learned from (especially South African) policymakers’ appropriation of scientific expertise and Concerns about informed consent of patients and the competence of health care professionals in administering appropriate genetic remedies in African societies.

### Biography

Anton van Niekerk is a distinguished Professor and Director of the Center for Applied Ethics at Stellenbosch University, South Africa and one of South Africa's best known Bioethicists. He is the author of 18 books and 145 peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters. He is a Member of the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC), the highest policy making body for research ethics in the country. In 1995, he was awarded the Stals Prize for Philosophy by the SA Academy for Science and Arts. He is a founding Director and Chairperson of the Board of the Ethics Institute of South Africa (EthicsSA). He was the Director of the International Association of Bioethics (IAB) from 2007 to 2012. He is a former President of the Philosophical Society of Southern Africa, a former Editor of the South African Journal of Philosophy.

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