

Health Law, Policy & Ethics Seminar Series

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Structural Racism and Income-Related Health Inequities in the Ontario Government and its Public Health Units' Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abstract: Early reports in Canada indicated that the health impacts of COVID-19 would be disproportionately worse for marginalized groups due to existing health inequities. While the federal, provincial, and territorial governments had extensive emergency powers at their disposal, the bulk of the pandemic response came from the provinces and territories. Despite warnings about the anticipated disparate impact of the pandemic, data from Ontario indicates that racialized populations and individuals in lower income households were the worst hit by the pandemic. This paper explores four aspects of the Ontario government and its 34 public health units' emergency response: (1) data collection on COVID-19 and health inequities, (2) administration of COVID-19 testing, (3) the provision of medical services to those with COVID-19, and (4) distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. For each of these four aspects of the Ontario government and its 34 public health units' response, we highlight central areas where structural racism and income-related health inequities were apparent.

Presenter

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Kathleen Hammond is an assistant professor at the Lincoln Alexander School of Law at Toronto Metropolitan University. Prior to joining Lincoln Law, she was a postdoctoral fellow with the Research Group on Health and Law at McGill University's Faculty of Law and a visiting fellow with the Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law and Policy at Harvard Law School. She holds a JD and BCL from McGill University. She completed an MPhil in Multi-Disciplinary Gender Studies and a PhD in Legal Sociology at the University of Cambridge where she was a Gates Cambridge scholar and a Commonwealth scholar. Her research spans across health law and policy, technology law, and gender and families. Although she specializes in assisted reproduction and is conducting two SSHRC-funded studies in this area, she has recently been working on COVID-19, looking at accountability and liability in the context of COVID-19 responses.