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Ethics Council discusses expensive medicines

How to deal with issues surrounding extremely expensive medicines in a just way? Who determines the prices, who pays them and who has access to such therapies? The German Ethics Council is holding its annual meeting at the Hotel Estrel in Berlin and via livestream on 22 June 2022, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Both with experts and the general public, the ethical challenges are discussed that arise when high-priced new medicines are used in a context of limited resources. One aim is to identify reasonable criteria for a sustainable and fair assessment, pricing and distribution of these drugs.

For some rare diseases that used to be hardly treatable, there now exist highly effective but sometimes extremely expensive drugs. Prices such as two million euros per single dose, or 275,000 euros for one year of treatment, are fraught with a number of ethical issues, especially given that more high-priced drugs are expected to be launched in the years to come. The interests of all insured persons to receive the best possible treatment, but also the demands of pharmaceutical companies to refinance research investments, must be weighed against the requirement to prevent boundless increases in health care costs and, in particular, health insurance contributions.

Considering the need for sustainable and responsible procedures despite limited resources, the German Ethics Council, on the occasion of its annual meeting in 2022, would like to stimulate ethical debate on how to deal with issues surrounding new expensive medicines in solidary and fair ways.

What leads to high prices and how can they be justified in a solidarity-based health care system? How can the availability and fair allocation of cost-intensive medicines be improved? How can fair allocation also be achieved at an international level, given global disparities in access to resources as well as diverse health care systems?

The annual meeting will be held as an in-person event for the first time since 2019. The event will also be broadcast via livestream.

Further information, including on the programme and registration, is available on the German Ethics Council's website at <https://www.ethikrat.org/en/annual-meetings/steep-prices-speedy-recovery>.

Members

Prof. Dr. med. Alena Buyx (Chair)
Prof. Dr. iur. Dr. h. c. Volker Lipp (Vice-Chair)
Prof. Dr. phil. Dr. h. c. Julian Nida-Rümelin (Vice-Chair)
Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Susanne Schreiber (Vice-Chair)

Prof. Dr. iur. Steffen Augsberg
Regional bishop Dr. theol. Petra Bahr
Prof. Dr. theol. Franz-Josef Bormann
Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Hans-Ulrich Demuth
Prof. Dr. iur. Helmut Frister
Prof. Dr. theol. Elisabeth Gräß-Schmidt
Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Dr. phil. Sigrid Graumann
Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Armin Grunwald
Prof. Dr. med. Wolfram Henn
Prof. Dr. rer. nat. Ursula Klingmüller
Stephan Kruip
Prof. Dr. theol. Andreas Lob-Hüdepohl
Prof. Dr. phil. habil. Annette Riedel
Prof. Dr. iur. Stephan Rixen
Prof. Dr. iur. Dr. phil. Frauke Rostalski
Prof. Dr. theol. Kerstin Schlägl-Flierl
Dr. med. Josef Schuster
Prof. Dr. phil. Mark Schweda
Prof. Dr. phil. Judith Simon
Jun.-Prof. Dr. phil. Muna Tatari

Press Contact

Ulrike Florian
Phone: +49 (0)30/203 70-246
Fax: +49 (0)30/203 70-252
Email: florian@ethikrat.org

Office

Jaegerstrasse 22/23
D-10117 Berlin
Phone: +49 (0)30/203 70-242
Fax: +49 (0)30/203 70-252
Email: kontakt@ethikrat.org
Website: www.ethikrat.org