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Setting Priorities and Allocating Funds for Global Health: (how) Can Global Burden of Disease (GBD) Data Help?

Wednesday January 3 2018, 08:30-10:00
Caroline House (M10), Room 204

The Global Burden of Disease (GBD) project quantifies the impact of different health conditions by combining information about morbidity and premature mortality within a single metric, the disability-adjusted life-year (DALY). One important goal for the GBD project (and an important reason for devoting substantial resources to it) has been to inform and improve decisions about global health policy. In particular, proponents of the GBD expected that GBD data could provide important insights for priority-setting and allocation of global health resources. How, precisely, GBD data can play this role, however, is not clear. In this talk, I discuss a number of contexts and different ways in which GBD data have been used. I argue that these uses rely on problematic assumptions and do not permit the conclusions researchers have drawn. I consider alternative uses of GBD data to inform policy decisions and argue that the data can play only a very modest role in decisions about global health policy.

Bio: Kristin Voigt is an Assistant Professor at McGill University, jointly appointed in the Institute for Health and Social Policy and the Department of Philosophy. She received her DPhil in political philosophy from the University of Oxford and has held post-doctoral positions at McGill, Harvard, Lancaster University and the European College of Liberal Arts. Kristin's research focuses on theories of equality and the links between philosophy and social policy. Her recent and ongoing projects address issues such as conceptions and measures of health and health inequality; the use of incentives to improve health outcomes; (childhood) obesity; higher education policy; and smoking and tobacco control.