

# BIOETHICS AND AN AFRICAN VALUE SYSTEM

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# The issues

- Bioethics and its global reach
- African cultures
- Yoruba value system
- Yoruba values and health care
- Yoruba culture and the principles of bioethics
- Facilitating bioethics in Yorubaland

# African cultures

- Between diversity and commonality
- Cultural values
- Moral values

# Yoruba value system

- Background to community
- Individuality and community

# Assumptions

- Person as creature of God
- Egalitarianism
- Destiny
- Capacity for moral virtue
- Personhood & communal relationships

# Moral values

- Against unnecessary harm to persons
- For human wellbeing and flourishing
- Responsibility to one's children and family
- Responsibility to determine appropriate choices in life (despite destiny)

# A traditional healthcare scenario

- Mother Sade, Daughter Laide & Healer
  - Family as healthcare giver
  - Mother and daughter as co-destined
  - An expansive notion of self
  - Openness vs privacy

# Bioethics and Yoruba values

- Yoruba moral value:
  - wellbeing or flourishing of person in community
    - Benefit to human beings
    - Avoidance of unnecessary harm to persons
  - Justice

# Autonomy?

- Self-governance
- Self-direction
  - Incompatible practice
    - Habit of deference to others
  - Compatible practice
    - Voluntary request for advice

# Autonomy in community

- Patient's voluntary involvement of family or faith group
- Community involvement in public health research
  - Room for patient refusal even with community consent

# Facilitating bioethics in Yorubaland

- Pay attention to the dynamism of culture
  - Different times; multiple centers
  - Difference in literacy versus difference in morality
  - Similarity if not identity of fundamental moral value
- Make ethical guidelines compatible with fundamental moral value