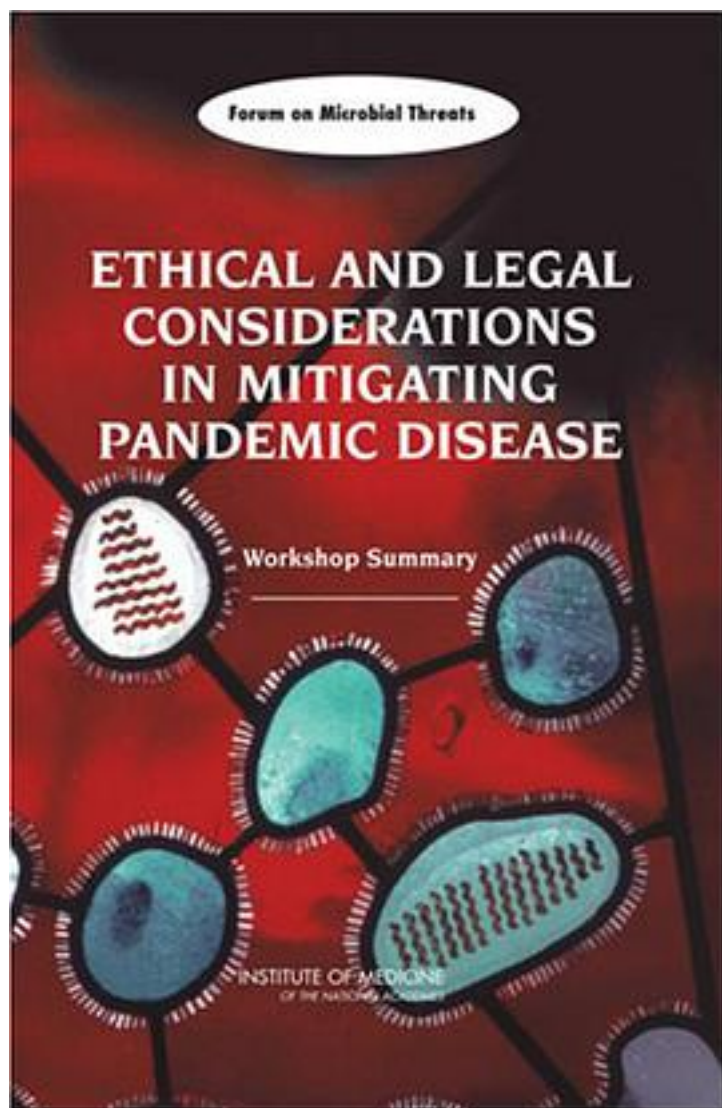


Ethical and Legal Considerations in Mitigating Pandemic Disease



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In recent public workshops and working group meetings, the Forum on Microbial Threats of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) has examined a variety of infectious disease outbreaks with pandemic potential, including those caused by influenza (IOM, 2005) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (IOM, 2004). Particular attention has been paid to the potential pandemic threat posed by the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, which is now endemic in many Southeast Asian bird populations. Since 2003, the H5N1 subtype of avian influenza has caused 185 confirmed human deaths in 11 countries, including some cases of viral transmission from human to human (WHO, 2007). But as worrisome as these developments are, at least they are caused by known pathogens. The next pandemic could well be caused by the emergence of a microbe that is still unknown, much as happened in the 1980s with the emergence of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and in 2003 with the appearance of the SARS coronavirus. Previous Forum meetings on pandemic disease have discussed the scientific and logistical challenges associated with pandemic disease recognition, identification, and response. Participants in these earlier meetings also recognized the difficulty of implementing disease control strategies effectively. Ethical and Legal Considerations in Mitigating Pandemic Disease: Workshop Summary as a factual summary of what occurred at the workshop.

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目录:

[Ethical and Legal Considerations in Mitigating Pandemic Disease_下载链接1](#)

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