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***The Ethics of Telemedicine in Africa
The Millennium Villages Project Experience***

The Millennium Villages Project (“MVP”) operates in villages throughout Africa at the community level, implementing research-based best practices in agriculture, health, water, gender equity, and education to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. In the villages in which MVP works, clinicians and community health workers are being hired to provide primary health care services at the clinical and community levels. MVP, through its mHealth activities and in partnership with Ericsson and Sony Ericsson, is strategically integrating mobile phone technology to enhance the provision of health care services. The use of mobile phones to deliver medical care to patients either through direct consultations or through call-in centers that provide medical guidance to local providers raises critical ethical and legal questions.

This paper explores the ethical and legal implications of mobile telemedicine and provides recommendations for practitioners considering telemedicine in low-resource international settings based on the MVP experience. Reviewing international and national laws and policies and professional association codes, this paper raises the issues of the ethical limits on the extent to which services may be offered via telemedicine, cross-jurisdictional licensing requirements, responsibility for patient consent and confidentiality, and implications for provider liability.

Katherine TODRYS, JD, is currently working with the Millennium Villages Project at the Earth Institute, Columbia University on a fellowship from the Yale Initiative for the Public Interest on patient confidentiality and access to health care. She has a law degree from Yale Law School, where she studied international human rights law. While in law school, she worked with the Open Society Institute Justice Initiative and Earthrights International on projects through the Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic at Yale, served as research assistant to Professor Oona Hathaway, and interned with the U.S. Law & Security Program at Human Rights First. E-mail: katherine.todrys@gmail.com.



Patricia MECHAEL, PhD MHS, is currently managing the integration of mobile technologies for the Millennium Villages Project at the Earth Institute, Columbia University. She has been involved in the field of International Health for 12 years with field experience in 20 countries and a focus on Africa. She has a Masters in International Health from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health and Hygiene and a PhD in Public Health and Policy from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She has served as Research Affiliate at the Rutgers University Center for Mobile Communication Studies and as Professor of Communication. She has been invited to provide guidance on the application of ICT, with a focus on mobile health technologies, to CARE-USA, Catholic Relief Services, the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, Abt and Associates, the UK Partnership for Global Health, and UNFPA and the World Health Organization Global Observatory for eHealth. E-mail: pmechael@gmail.com.

