

The COVID-19 pandemic has fuelled the debate about the use of the race category in medicine. It concerns several problems, such as difficult access to healthcare by representatives of minorities or the consolidation of social stereotypes by referring to folk racial categories in biomedical research and diagnostics. In the background of this debate, there is also a more comprehensive discussion about social exclusion and oppression towards minorities.

Use of racial categories in biomedical research and healthcare is controversial. On the one hand, it strengthens prevailing racial stereotypes and has no biological justification. On the other, it may be necessary to analyse the impact of racism or to combat inequalities. Moreover, many researchers agree that the experience of belonging to a particular race understood as a cultural construct has an impact on people's health and their reactions to the treatment process. Finally, there is no unequivocal consensus in the scientific community about the ontological status of the human races and whether and how these categories should be used in science.

In this project I am going to study how the category of race is conceptualised and used in biomedical research and healthcare. I will look at this issue not only from an ethical perspective but also from an ontological and methodological one. Ontology of race is a growing field of expertise basing on the results of empirical research (including, for example, population biology, genetics or epidemiology) as well as purely theoretical, analytic studies. Although there is a constant discussion in this area, its results often do not translate well into the bioethical discourse. At the same time, the issue of using race as a reference class in medicine is analysed primarily from an ethical perspective ignoring in-depth methodological and epistemological analysis.

I am asking:

- 1) Which ontological and normative positions about race are most justified in the light of recent empirical and theoretical studies on the subject?
- 2) How ontological beliefs about race (or folk care categories) affects biomedical research and healthcare?
- 3) What are the fundamental methodological problems resulting from the use of the race category in medicine?
- 4) Is it possible to create a theoretical framework for talking about the effects of racialisation without reinforcing the folk understanding of race?
- 5) What would such a theoretical framework look like, considering the need for applying an intersectional approach to bioethical and medical problems?

The answers to these questions may have a real impact on medicine, both in terms of research methodology as well as healthcare, e.g. diagnostic algorithms or the relations between a physician and a patient. Common use of the category of race in medicine (even when understood as a sociopolitical concept) may lead to objectifying, and "scientifying" existing folk categories about races, and thus may indirectly help to sustain these practices. However, at the same time, we must take into account the effects of racialisation processes on people's health. The aim of my project is to propose a reliable and precise framework for studying these issues. Thank to that we will be able to speak of racialisation and its effects (such as racism) without perpetuating them by using the category of race as if it existed.