

SCAFFOLDING OF ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

To the Editor,

Ethical guidelines for safeguarding the Human subject were published in 1979 to provide the idealistic groundwork for existing laws prevailing research for human subjects. The guidance and rule in this regard had already been set forth by “Nuremberg Code”¹ and “Helsinki Declaration”² but the Belmont Report has done a yeoman service in developing the three basic fundamental ethical rules which are: respect for person, beneficence and justice. Indeed, there are many other principles applied in ethical decision-making during research but these rules are providing inclusive scaffolding for ethical decision making in research concerning human subjects³.

The rule of respect of person acknowledges the poise and independence of persons and directs that those with diminished autonomy be given particular safeguard. This rule requires that subject give well-versed consent to partaking in research because of their impending susceptibility; these includes prisoners, human fetuses, children and people with relentless disabilities.

The rule of beneficence requires researchers to protect persons by escalating predictable benefits and plummeting potential harm. The plan of a study and its risk and reimbursement therefore must be examined carefully. In some cases, this means that alternative way must be found to obtain the benefits required from the research.

The principles of justice require that subjects be treated fairly. The subjects should vigilantly and justifiably be selected to guarantee that definite persons and classes of persons (e.g. prisoners, the aged or the poor) are neither methodically be selected nor excluded unless scientific or ethically valid reasons exist for doing so.

All these three rules carry sturdy ethical vigor and challenging ethical dilemmas arise when any one of the ethical rules comes in divergence with others. Nevertheless, the researchers must understand and apply these principles to help ensure that people who concur to be investigational subjects are treated in a courteous and principled behavior.

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