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Oct 9 1997

re: drug testing on military personnel / informed consent as related

Sir,

In comment of the use of military personnel as uninformed subjects upon which experimental drugs are being administered, I think the ethical deficiet involved is painfully obvious

Any 'rule' that allows such activities to take place should be dissolved immediatly, and full disclosure given to those who have previously been used as testing fodder.

The blatant disregard for the unwitting participents is abhorrent, our military personnel are exposed to plenty of bodily risks in relationship to battle, they should not be viewed as so disposable that thier own government could use them as ~~tabol~~ laboratory experiments as well

Any participation should be voluntary, with fully informed consent. All data regarding the physical affects of the induced poison, as well as all known data regarding the drug used to possibly counteract the poison, and all contraindications, ect... should be made clear to the subject before he gives his approval. Anything less (see: Gulf War Syndrome) subjects our service members to the possible threat of long term health loss.

Now, a comment on the two questions posed:

- "When is it ethical to expose volunteers to chemical and biological poisons to test drugs that may provide protection against those poisons?"

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(cont.)

A "volunteer", by definition, must be fully aware of any bodily harm he may incure as a result of his participation. All information and "what if's" regarding his exposures must be relayed, and he should confirm that he accepts these risks.

If he is supplied with data derived from animal testing, he should be made aware that this data is not proven accurate for the human response to said toxins and antidote. Animal testing, an abhorrent practice, often puts human health in peril via misleading data.

To the second question posed:

- "If drugs that protect people against poisons can't be ethically tested, then what evidence is needed to adequately demonstrate thier safety and effectiveness?"

Very tricky (contradictary) wording in this question. It at once implies that the drugs do indeed "protect" people ~~peo~~ from poisons, yet deems it unethical conduct live human testing to produce evidence of it's safety.

I say that if the developers of these drugs have such confiedence that they are both "safe and effective", they should unflinchingly offer themselves to demonstrate these qualities via thier own exposure. Would you accept bread from a baker who refused to ingest is own wares?

No harm would come to <u>these</u> volunteers if indeed thier claim of manufacturing a safe, effective antidote (to counteract the poisons they would ~~first~~ also be exposed to) is true.

How can the truth of this be argued?

The ugly fact is that animals, inmates, military personnel, the poor and minorities have been the unfortunate victims of pernicious exposures, easy targets for thier lack of ability to protest. The mentaly retarded children being fed radioative breakfast foods is yet another example of how the weakest among us make the likeliest victims. The notion that human minds put these abhorrent situations into action sheds a chilling light on our species.

With better protection of human (and animal eventualy, if benevolence is not an extinct quality) welfare, it's getting harder to find "living petri dishes" to subject to vivisection and stealth drug testing. To take advantage of any population and endanger thier lives and health is to create harm, a horrid perversion of the gift of life. It is not lessened by the species or rank or social position of such a victim, it's the act itself that produces unethical behavior. To rationalize (it's "only" a retarded child, "only" a stray/laboratory bred dog, it "only" a service person, ect...) doesnot cleanse one's hands of thier deeds. But it dose rinse away a layer of thier honor, and the very errosion of this trait is a key element into the decline of human morality.

Any lack of informed consent constitutes an assault. Not only on the flesh that will be made to bear the experiment, [illegible] on our moral fiber as a whole. It makes one feel

It is tragic that the minds of men pay homage to the design and incorporation of devices to maim and kill one another, and it's only natural to want to create a shield or antidote to deflect intended harm.

But when more harm is created in the attempt to provide safety, the arena of damage only multiplies.

It appears that non-American allied forces who faced similar exposure in the Gulf environment were advantaged by being supplied a non-porous barrier suit and were not ordered to ingest so-called antidote and antidote enchancing drugs. The American exposure, a sorrow to behold, has coincidently provided plenty of live test examples of what is and is not safe and effective.

There are plenty of victims of such poisonings in regions where such abhorrent "weapons" are used to create morbidities, it seems not only wise but mercifull to attempt antidote experiments on those who bear the misfortune of having fallen prey to such warfare.

This seems more "ethical" than deliberately exposing any otherwise healthy flesh (regardless of species) to "created" poisonings, administered for reaction experiments ("vivisection", which is a moral crime in my eyes)

If you have a population in need of treatment already, why increase the exposed/affected quantity? We are dealing with an unpleasant topic (poisons) and to search for ethics amid such an area requires that you do not become the very type of harm inducer (a poisoner) you are trying to disarm. There is scant nobility or ethics aquirable in such, but I'd prefer to see in-vitro (in vitro) or computer-model testing replace live testing, there is no ethics in preverting a healthy body for the sake of education, unless the flesh in question gives it's full, informed consent. Respect as you wish to be respected, that is the substance of ethics. — A Citizen