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ABSTRACT

A variety of objections to human germ-line genetic engineering have been raised, such as the claim that we ought not to place individuals at significant risk without their consent. It has also been argued that it is paternalistically objectionable to confer significant benefits on individuals without their consent. As well as imposing a risk of harm to non-consenting parties, there is the risk of harm to others. This paper evaluates these and related objections to germ-line genetic engineering. While a complete prohibition on human germ-line genetic engineering is rejected it is argued that acceptable germ-line engineering (a) should at least expand and enrich rather than restrict and constrain the choices for individuals affected, and (b) should not seek to change basic human dispositions and values (‘human nature’)

**Community without communitarianism: HIV/AIDS research,
prevention and treatment in Australia and the developing world**
Deborah Zion 20

ABSTRACT

The advent of HIV focussed broad social attention on the group of people most affected by it in Australia, the so-called ‘gay community’. However, what a gay community actually was, and what kind of rights and duties were being attached to it remained unclear. However, it is obvious that such a community — or communities — did not fit the model proposed by

communitarian writers like Michael Sandel and Charles Taylor, whereby subjects cannot stand outside their own constitutive attachments. I also consider the common criticism of communitarianism, and see what kinds of collectives can in fact be considered ethical.

The first part of this paper looks at the ethical issues surrounding community attachment of this kind in Australia in relation to the ethics of HIV/AIDS clinical research. In particular I examine the way in which certain forms of gay community attachment can be used to strengthen personal autonomy and check exploitation within the prevention and research process.

The second part of this paper draws upon the issues just discussed. In particular I focus on the use of 'community' in the research process in developing countries, and suggest ways in which cultural considerations might strengthen autonomy. However, I go on to suggest that in many cases the idea of community has served the opposite purpose, and has in fact been used to oppress certain individuals and groups within the developing world, in the so-called interests of the greater good. In order to avoid this, I suggest a model of social and ethical research whereby all subjects and researchers in the clinical process might stand in greater relationships of equality with each other.

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ARTICLE

The UK House of Commons report on the influence of the pharmaceutical industry: Lessons for equitable access to medicines in Australia

Thomas Faunce and George Tomossy

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the recent UK House of Commons Health Committee report on the Influence of the Pharmaceutical Industry in relation to its findings and recommendations concerning access to medicines, and in particular the continuance of cost effectiveness or reference pricing. This mechanism of bargaining down the price of drugs on social justice grounds recently has been targeted by the US Department of Commerce as an unjustifiable non-tariff barrier to trade that should be eliminated in all OECD countries. Concerns have been raised that certain provisions in the AUSFTA may have been designed to achieve this end, in defiance of norms of democratic legitimacy, moral responsibility and the international right to health. Here we examine some implications of the UK House of Commons Report for the PBS in Australia.

ETHICS COMMITTEE REFLECTION

Self-experimentation, ethics and efficacy

Simon Gandevia

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ABSTRACT

Much fundamental progress in medicine and, more broadly, in medical sciences has required or benefited from self-experiments. This review provides a definition of self-experiments in which experimenters themselves are subjects for their research, and it considers the logical steps which such experiments require. Lay, medical and scientific communities are often unaware of the contributions and the full range of outcomes from self-experiments. Hence, some implications for ethics committees are explored.

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