

Ethics in human experimentation— new report

The Medical Research Council has approved for publication the report by a working group* established two years ago to study current requirements, procedures and practices with respect to surveillance of the ethical aspects of human experimentation.

Five non-scientific persons were part of the working group to ensure that viewpoints of the lay community were considered.

Highlights of the report follow:

(1) Each research proposal involving human subjects should be reviewed, before the experiments start, by a local ethics review committee containing people from the lay public as well as the scientific community. The committee should have the power to prohibit the research or to impose conditions under which the research may be performed.

(2) No human being may be subjected to an experimental procedure without his own expressed consent, freely given in the light of full information about the proposed experiment.

(3) The decision of the ethics review committee on whether to allow a certain research program to be undertaken is based on a weighing of the potential risks and the potential benefits of the research protocol.

The potential risks of the research are borne by the subject. The potential benefits can accrue to the subject or to others suffering from the same disease or to society in general. The judgment of whether the potential group of subjects may ethically be asked to expose themselves to the risks of the experiment so that society as a whole might derive the potential benefits must be made in the light of a number of considerations, including:

- the scientific validity of the question to which the research is directed;
- the group to whom the potential benefit will accrue; if the subjects themselves stand to benefit, the risks to which they might be exposed might be justified;
- the severity of the risks in the research;

— the ability of the proposed group of subjects to give consent based on well understood information and free from pressures that might coerce them into consenting. Thus it might be considered acceptable to expose healthy adults to certain procedures but not mentally ill adults nor prisoners nor hospital patients.

(4) Some diseases affect children or cause mental incompetence. Potential subjects for research in these diseases are therefore incompetent to consent on their own behalf to participate in research protocols. The working group was unable to reach complete agreement on the condition under which such research should be permitted. It recommends special safeguards against misuse of such people.

(5) Groups such as prisoners pose special problems. Since they are in one place and under uniform conditions, prisoners may be asked to participate in research more frequently than the rest of the population. Since they are captive, they may feel themselves under greater pressure to participate. Similar pressures, though less marked, might be felt by employees, students, or hospital patients.

Groups such as native peoples or ethnic groups, while by no means captive, may be asked to participate in research projects more frequently because of genetic, social characteristics.

(6) Research on a pregnant woman unavoidably involves the foetus she is carrying. The intention of a mother to undergo a therapeutic abortion should have no influence on the considerations of risks to the foetus until the point during the abortion procedure at which abortion becomes irreversible. Research on a living foetus is expressly forbidden.

Health and Welfare wins award for "Operation Lifestyle"

The Department of Health and Welfare has received an International Broadcasting Award honouring the world's best radio and television commercials, from the Hollywood Radio and Television Society for the 60-second message — "Heal Thyself". It was one of the seven finalists in the public service category of the competition and best in the field of general safety. More than 8,000 commercials were entered from many parts of the world.

In addition, "Heal Thyself" and

Heal Thyself

The following is the text of the award-winning radio announcement:

"Go cautiously into the world around you, it is not a safe place. Practice safety. Learn first aid, or heal thyself, in which case, good luck! Remember seat belts may not hold your pants up, but in the clutch they won't let you down. Learn how to deal with emergencies, for even though the world is full of heroes, their lines are always busy. Keep in mind that accidents are born of negligence; how you handle them is reflected in your lifestyle, which predicts with reasonable accuracy what your chances of survival really are. Your lifestyle is your own; it will change as you see fit to change it. And whether or not it is clear to you, in spite of all its broken bones, dented fenders and slipped discs, it is still covered by your insurance. Strive to stay alive. Join Slack Shack, Levis and Health and Welfare Canada in OPERATION LIFESTYLE for life."

another 60-second spot — "Four Minute Mile" — were finalists at another international contest in New York. Selected from more than 7,400 entries submitted by 45 countries, they were judged by over 450 advertising professionals from 13 countries.

The two spots were produced for the Department by Commershells Inc. of Toronto and were presented as a paid message by Slack Shack and Levis of Canada over radio stations in Ottawa, Kingston and Toronto.

The messages were part of a package of four advertisements developed as part of "Operation Lifestyle", the public education campaign of the Department of National Health and Welfare to encourage Canadians to better their health through improved "lifestyle" habits.

Queen at Commonwealth Games

During a visit to Canada from July 26 to August 6, Queen Elizabeth will open the Commonwealth Games in Edmonton, Alberta, on August 3.

The Queen will also visit Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

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