

## Editorial



# Ethics in human research

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Utilitarianism, which is the most well-known and influential theory of ethics, is based on the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In the past, some utilitarians have argued that the few can sacrifice justice to achieve greater benefits for the many. However, the happiness of the many cannot compensate for the suffering or unhappiness of the few. Everyone has dignity and worth as a human being, and no one should infringe on the dignity and worth of others, nor should one's own dignity and worth be infringed upon. Although countries stipulate human dignity in their constitutions, it is considered an innate value that must be guaranteed even if it is not explicitly mentioned in a country's constitution.

The Belmont Report, which is concerned with ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects in research after the problems with the Tuskegee Syphilis Study (1932–1972), was prepared by the National Committee of the United States in September 1978. In recent decades, in line with the development of biotechnology, countries have established the basic principles underpinning research on human subjects based on this report.

The three basic ethical principles for the use of human subjects in research in the Belmont Report are [1]: 1) respect for persons (protecting the autonomy of all people and treating them with courtesy and respect and allowing for informed consent; researchers must be truthful and conduct no deception); 2) beneficence (the philosophy of "do no harm" while maximizing benefits for the research project and minimizing risks to the research subjects); and 3) justice (ensuring reasonable, non-exploitative, and well-considered procedures are administered fairly—the fair distribution of costs and benefits to potential research participants—and equally).

With recent advances in research methodologies, various new types of human subject research are being introduced, and researchers are being educated through the Institutional Review Board and trying to comply with these ethical policies. However, since researchers are also human beings, they may sometimes be in the borderline between “permissible practices” and “violation of actual law” without even realizing it. Researchers should always prioritize human dignity. Research results obtained by sacrificing humans are not for humans.

## REFERENCES

1. Protection of human subjects; Belmont Report: notice of report for public comment Fed Regist 1979; 44:23191-23197.