

Principle of respect for human vulnerability and personal integrity: Preliminary outline



Mexico City - November 24, 2009

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 - Established October 2008



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



**International Bioethics
Committee (IBC)**

Distribution: limited

SHS/EST/CIB-16/09/CONF.503/3
21 April 2009
Original: English only

**WORKING DOCUMENT ON
THE PRINCIPLE OF RESPECT FOR
HUMAN VULNERABILITY AND PERSONAL INTEGRITY**

Intention of the draft

To initiate and stimulate debate of the IBC at its 16th session in Mexico City



Starting point



History

- 1978 Belmont Report
- 1996 rev. Declaration of Helsinki
- 1997 UNESCO (Decl. Human Genome and Human Rights)
- 2002 CIOMS Biomed. Research involving human subjects
- 1998 Barcelona Declaration

Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights (2005)

- „In applying and advancing scientific knowledge, medical practice and associated technologies, **human vulnerability** should be taken into account. Individuals and groups of special vulnerability should be protected and the personal integrity of such individuals respected.“ *(Art 8)*

Outline of the text

- I Introduction/Issue/Outline
- II General Framework
- III Historical and Philosophical Approach
- IV Vulnerabilities in Various Categories of Persons Requiring Special Protection
- V Vulnerabilities in Various Contexts
- VI Results and Suggestions
- VII Further Reading
- VIII Conclusion

General framework

- Medical Practice
- Human experimentation and research
- Health care and biomedical research policies – Public health (social responsibility)

Important issues to discuss

Question Nr. 1: The extent of the concept

- Every human being is vulnerable because of its very existence
- Need to define certain criteria: the impossibility or incapacity to react
- Need to define certain criteria: But – beware of the danger of a too broad definition which loses force (*„everybody is vulnerable“*)

Question Nr. 2:

The recognition and means of protection of individuals or groups

- When and under which circumstances should vulnerability be recognized ?
- **Different categories (characteristic) vs. different contexts (condition)**

Question Nr. 3:

The respect of personal integrity

- In regard to the **application** and advancement of scientific knowledge of medical practice and its associated technologies
- Principles of solidarity, justice and equity

Various categories (to be completed)

- Children
- Women (see specific slide)
- Handicapped persons
- Elderly and very old persons
- Mentally ill persons
- Temporarily incapacitated persons
- Immigrants
- Asylum seekers
- Nomads
- Ethnic and racial minorities
- Unemployed persons
- Homeless persons
- Prisoners
- Illiterate persons
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Women

- Women of childbearing potential
- Pregnant women
- *Gender equality, but: existing differences between women and men are of a biological and social nature. Sex refers to the biologically determined differences between women and men. Gender refers to the social differences.*
- **We have to be aware that in some parts of the world women are especially vulnerable due to their social conditioning and to an eventual lack of education**

Various contexts (to be completed)

- Persons in hierarchical situations
- (eg students, employees)
- Members of the armed forces
- Members of the police
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Next steps ?

Suggestions for further steps:

- Representation of members of all UNESCO regions in the working group
- Gender balanced
- Balanced in the different disciplines
- Organized meeting(s) to discuss and define the specific issues
- **Guidance for the stakeholders (Governments, Ethics Committees, health professionals etc.)**

Thank you for your attention!

