Ethical Situation 1

Long ago, doctors drew a blood specimen from you as part of treating minor anemia (hemoglobin deficiency). Unknown to you, the sample was stored. Now researchers plan to use stored samples from you and many other people to look for genetic factors that may influence anemia. It is no longer possible to ask your consent because you are no longer alive. Modern technology can read your entire genetic makeup from the blood sample, and there is a good chance that using your specimen and the specimen of others will lead to a new breakthrough in treating severely anemic patients.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 2

You are testing a new drug which you hope will aid patients with HIV. Several drugs which aid patients with HIV already exist and are on the market. You are afraid that mixing the drugs will “muddy” the results of experimentation. In your study, is it ethical to forbid your patients from using these already existing drugs? That is, your treatment group will receive the new drug and your control group will receive a placebo. Both groups will be forbidden from using any other drug to treat their HIV.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 3

An 81-year-old man with multiple sclerosis is hospitalized. His doctor feels that the patient could benefit from an experimental surgery. The doctor asks the patient about this on Monday morning and the patient agrees to the surgery. However, come Monday evening (before the surgery), the patient appears concerned. He tells the doctor that he does not want to be operated on. On Tuesday morning, when the patient has rested for some time, the patient again gives his consent to have surgery. He appears to not recall his actions on Monday evening. Should you go forward with the experimental surgery?

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 4

Congress has often objected to spending public money on projects that seem “indecent” or “in bad taste.” The arts are most often affected, but science can also be a target. Congress once refused to fund an experiment to study the effect of marijuana on sexual response. The journal *Science* reported:

*Dr. Harris B. Rubin and his colleagues at the Southern Illinois Medical School proposed to exhibit pornographic films to people who had smoked marijuana and to measure the response with sensors attached to the penis.*

*Marijuana, sex, pornographic films---all in one package, priced at $120,000. The senators smothered the hot potato with a ketchup of colorful oratory and mixed metaphors.*

*“I am firmly convinced we can do without this combination of red ink, ‘blue’ movies, and Acapulco ‘gold,’” Senator John McClellan of Arkansas opined in a persiflage of purple prose.*

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 5

A behavioral psychologist is interested in how adult males behave when their “personal space” is violated. To do this, the psychologist sets up shop in a public bathroom on a university campus. He blocks off urinals to force men walking into the bathroom to use either a urinal next to an experimenter (treatment group) or a urinal separated from the experimenter (control group). Another experimenter, using a periscope from a toilet stall, measures how long the subject takes to start urinating and how long he kept at it.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 6

Elderly patients often have to pay for supplemental services and devices. Some of these devices are thought to affect the overall quality of life and thus health of these patients. Researchers studying aging proposed to investigate the effect of supplemental health services on the quality of life of older people. Eligible patients on the rolls of a large medical clinic were to be randomly assigned to treatment or control groups. The treatment group would be offered hearing aids, dentures, transportation, and other services not available without charge to the control group. In the end, the scientists are interested in comparing the overall health of the two groups.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 7

Students in a psychology class agree to take part in a statistical study which requires them to be interviewed outside of class. When the students arrive at the testing center for their interview, they are told that the interviews are running late. They are placed into a waiting room where a theft is staged and the thief is present in the room with them. Some students wait alone while others are in pairs (these are the treatments being tested). The researchers are interested in whether the theft will be reported more often by individuals or pairs.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 8

A social psychologist is interested in the behavioral patterns of religious fundamentalists. In order to study the behavioral patterns, the psychologist pretends to be converted to membership in a fundamentalist group in order to attend private meetings at which she is able to study the behavioral pattern of the group.

The psychologist publishes a paper citing some of the behavior patterns that she saw at the meeting.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 9

A survey is being administered to local middle school children. The survey is distributed nationally by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In the survey, the young teenagers are asked if they have become sexually active. Those who said, “Yes” were then asked, “How old were you when you had sexual intercourse for the first time?”

The surveys were given without any prior warning or consent from the parents of the young teenagers.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 10

The Tobacco Alliance Resource Group or TAR Group, a research group funded fully by tobacco giant Phillip Morris, is randomly surveying adults in urban areas in order to find public opinion on smoking in public places.

The survey takes 1 minute to complete. In roughly half of the surveys, the surveyors disclose, *prior to questioning*, that TAR is fully funded by tobacco giant Phillip Morris. In the remaining half of the surveys, the surveyor discloses, *at the end of questioning*, that TAR is fully funded by tobacco giant Phillip Morris.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 11

A psychologist conducts the following experiment:

The psychologist asks each subject his or her attitude towards cheating, and then she has each subject play a game rigged so that winning without cheating is impossible.

The computer that organizes the game also records, unknown to the subjects, whether or not they cheat. Following the game, the subjects are again asked their attitudes towards cheating.

The psychologist found that those subjects who cheated tended to change their attitudes towards cheating, specifically looking at it as being more acceptable.

What are your thoughts?
Ethical Situation 12

For your class project you decide to determine what effects caffeine has on someone’s blood pressure.

You get twenty of your friends to participate. You measure the blood pressure of each of your friends and then you randomly assign each friend to one of two groups.

The first group takes five caffeine pills each day (one every two hours) for a period of two weeks. The second group takes five aspirin tablets each day (one every two hours) for a period of two weeks.

Each group is blinded to the particular treatment they are receiving. After two weeks is up, you again measure the blood pressure of each individual. You compare back to the initial blood pressure.

What are your thoughts?