

A Right to Experimental Drugs?

School of Nursing and Health Sciences, Capella University

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Introduction

The moral right to experimental treatments for patients with no alternative therapeutic choices is a difficult and contentious subject in the healthcare system. One side of the argument is that people in life-or-death situations should be allowed to try whatever therapy they choose, regardless of whether or not the evidence supporting it is complete. Concerns concerning patient safety, potential for abuse, and larger influence on public health, however, need serious thought (Mummolo & Peterson, 2019).). This study will investigate and defend the position that patients do have a moral right to obtain experimental medications under specific circumstances. The costs and advantages of making these medications broadly accessible will be weighed alongside applicable ethical theories and concepts, the importance of informed consent, and other factors.

Relevant ethical theories and moral principles

The ethical theories and moral principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and fairness are all applicable to the moral right to receive experimental medications (Varkey, 2021). Patients should have the freedom to choose their own medical care, and this includes trying experimental therapies when conventional medicine has failed. Understanding that experimental medications may provide prospective advantages that exceed the dangers, beneficence stresses the obligation to improve the well-being of patients. The principle of non-maleficence emphasizes the duty to do no damage, calling for stringent oversight of experimental medications. Providing experimental pharmaceuticals raises concerns about the influence on equal access to therapies and research possibilities for all patients, because justice demands the fair allocation of healthcare resources. These ethical concepts and ideas provide a framework for balancing the needs of individual patients with those of society as a whole.

The Relevance of Informed Consent

When it comes to gaining access to experimental medications, the idea of informed consent is of the utmost importance. Patients must be given accurate and thorough information about the treatment's experimental nature, risks, benefits, and other options in order to provide their informed consent (Varkey, 2021). Patients should be given enough information to make their own healthcare choices, taking into account the risks and limits of experimental treatments.

Costs and Benefits of Widely Available Unproven Drugs

According to Failli et al. (2021), widely accessible, untested medications should have their costs and benefits carefully weighed. Lack of thorough testing and the possibility of unknown dangers raise financial worries about patient safety. Spending money on therapies that turn out to be unsuccessful or even dangerous might give people false hope and squander valuable resources. Evidence-based medicine might be slowed down if time and money aren't spent on studies that are supported by science. On the other side, patients who have tried everything else may find hope in widely accessible but untested medications, which provide a slim prospect of enhanced quality of life or even survival (Failli et al., 2021). In addition, it may encourage more people to take part in clinical trials, which might hasten the gathering of data and ultimately contribute to better medical understanding. When seeking the best possible healthcare results, it is essential to strike a balance between these costs and benefits, keeping in mind issues of patient safety, scientific integrity, and appropriate resource allocation.

Arguments For and Against Offering Unproven Drugs

Arguments for offering unproven medicines include recognizing patient autonomy, allowing individuals to make their own healthcare decisions in the face of limited treatment options, and providing optimism and potential quality of life enhancements. In addition, expanding access to unproven medicines can expedite research by increasing participation in clinical trials, which could lead to medical breakthroughs (Failli et al., 2021). In contrast, arguments against offering unproven drugs highlight patient safety concerns, as these drugs have not been subjected to rigorous testing. There is a possibility that patients will be exposed to unidentified risks, adverse effects, and ineffective treatments. In addition, limiting access promotes scientific integrity and the value of evidence-based medicine, ensuring that treatments are exhaustively evaluated prior to widespread use. In addition, responsible resource allocation is highlighted, with a focus on allocating funds to established remedies and research with higher success probabilities and broader benefits (Borysowski & Górski, 2020). In the decision-making process regarding the availability of unproven medicines, it is vital to strike a balance between patient autonomy and safety, scientific integrity, and responsible resource allocation.

Supporting View using Ethical Theories or Moral Principles

The ethical theories of autonomy and beneficence strongly support the moral right to access unproven medicines for patients with no other treatment options. Individuals are empowered to make decisions regarding their own health and well-being when patient autonomy is emphasized (Varkey et al., 2021). In addition, the principle of beneficence emphasizes the significance of fostering the best interests of patients, which may necessitate contemplating unproven treatments when all other options have been exhausted. While precautions must be taken to ensure patient safety and minimize risks, the ethical principles of autonomy and beneficence provide a compelling basis for the moral right to access unproven medications.

Conclusion

Patients with limited or no treatment options have a moral right to access unproven medications. By investigating pertinent ethical theories, recognizing the significance of informed consent, and assessing the costs and benefits of ubiquitous availability, a balanced approach can be attained. While patient autonomy and the pursuit of potential benefits support the moral right, concerns regarding patient safety and the broader impact on public health must be addressed through the implementation of appropriate regulations and safeguards. In determining the moral right to experimental medicines for critically ill patients, a compassionate and morally sound approach can be taken by establishing a balance between autonomy and public welfare.

References

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