

Ethical guidelines for research on prisoners

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Introduction:

"Prisoner" is defined as a person who is involuntarily captured or imprisoned in a penal institution. These persons are captured according to civil and penal laws and/or are persons who should be imprisoned until an accusation is proved false.

"Minimal risk" refers to the probability and amount of physical or psychological risk that a person is naturally exposed to during daily life, or encounters in routine medical, dentistry, or psychological examinations.

Υ- For research assessment to be moral, these items should be considered:

- A. Members of the ethics committee should have no special relationship with prison authorities.
- B. At least one member of the ethics committee should be a prisoner or a representative of them with enough experience in the assessment of research; if the research project is being reviewed by several committees, the presence of one prisoner or their representative in one of the committees is enough.
- C. If prisoners are not accessible, the committee should choose someone as the prisoners' representative who has some information about the subject and has received information about the prison's condition from prisoners themselves.

Υ- Ethical researches on prisoners consist of :

- A. Researches with the aim of understanding potential causes, effects, and processes of imprisonment and the person's corrupt behavior, on the condition that research does not harm the prisoners more than minimal risk and does not disturb them.
- B. Researches at the aim of assessing prisons and prisoners provided that research does not harm the prisoners more than minimal risk and does not disturb them.
- C. Researches whose results are restricted to prisoners by obtaining informed consent.
- D. Researches that are only applicable to prisons (for example vaccination trials and research on hepatitis that is more prevalent in prisons than any other place and also research on social and psychological problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, and sexual encroachments), after approval by the ethics committee (after counseling with criminal and medical professionals).
- E. Practical researches that create innovation and are acceptable because they aim to promote the health and condition of prisoners. In researches with no benefit for some of the participants, informed consent should be obtained from individuals themselves, and the research proposal should be approved by the ethics committee after consulting appropriate experts such as criminal and medical professionals.

Υ- When the ethics committee is assessing a research in which prisoners are involved, following ethical issues should be considered:

- A. The research should be one form of research mentioned in item (Υ).
- B. Prisoners should not be involved in researches as preferred participants because of special conditions such as their accessibility. Also we cannot deprive them from research benefits.
- C. All information pertaining to prisoners should be confidential except for situations that pose danger to other people.
- D.
- E. Any potential benefits provided by participating in the research, in comparison with general conditions of life, health care practices, food quality and in general, available facilities in prison should not limit the prisoners ability for risk-benefit assessment.
- F. Potential risks of research should be equal to research risks imposed on none- imprisoned volunteer participants.
- G. Information should be given to the person in an understandable language.
- H. Prisoners should be assured that their participation will not influence the court's decision to grant probation.
- I. Selection of prisoners for participation in the research should be justly for all of them and free of unreasonable interventions by prison managers and prisoners themselves; a control group should be randomly selected from among the prisoners who meet the inclusion criteria.

J. When the review board decides that follow up and care of participants is necessary after the conclusion of research, every effort should be made to ensure proper care and follow up based individuals conviction and also giving adequate information to the prisoners.