

# Ethics & Medical Research

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## International Standards for Research

As you read the material for the next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the readings:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently to these issues in the next class meeting.

### Readings

- Juhana Idänpään-Heikkilä & Sev Fluss, "International Ethical Guidance From the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences", pp. 168–173.
- Ruth Macklin, "Appropriate Ethical Standards", pp. 711–718.

### Questions

1. What was the purpose of the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) in making its guidelines? What challenges did it face, especially when it comes to the ethics of international research in developing countries, and how did respond to these challenges? Do you think it did an adequate job?
2. According to Macklin, what is the debate between those who advocate universal ethical principles for international research and those who want to see more relativistic principles for international research that are sensitive to cultural and economic differences between nations? What is her distinction between ethical standards and procedures, and how is this supposed to help ease tensions between universalism and relativism? Do you think this is a viable approach, especially when it comes to the "double standard" debate?
3. According to Idänpään-Heikkilä and Fluss, what is CIOMS' guidance concerning informed consent? How does Macklin use the issue of informed consent in international research to illustrate how her distinction between standards and procedures can help ease tensions between universal ethical principles and relativistic cultural norms? Do you believe that Macklin's approach is convincing on this issue?