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Exam Two

Biomedical Ethics

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#2 Since human beings are not perfect and make mistakes, I argue that drug and sex offenders should be given a chance to rehabilitate themselves through medical treatment or take part in experimental trials. But the decision for such an opportunity for those offenders should be made on a case by case base because not every individual is the ideal candidate for medical treatment or an experimental trial. It depends on the kind of offense, they committed and their willingness to take responsibility for their behavior and do something about it. Drug and sex offenses are serious behavioral issues and should not be taken lightly under any circumstances. Society is going to be arguing, what about the victims or their families who suffered through sex and drug offenses. This is another point why being cautious must be practiced on who is getting the treatment or is taking part in trails. On the other hand, the offender should get the chance to give consent, if he wants to take part or not. Nobody should be forced to take an experimental drug and suffer the consequences through a jurisdictional decision. After all, judges are not medical experts and alternative treatments are an essential part in those agreements.

What are drug and sex offenders? A drug offender is a person which is involved in taking illegal substances like heroin, cocaine, or in most states still illegal, marihuana. It can be also someone who is engaging in selling narcotics and is himself not dependent on them. Most of the time that is not the case and dealing goes hand in hand with being dependent on illegal substances. If offenders are being cut, the law has harsh prison sentences for them, and this does not solve the problem with being dependent on drugs or selling them. Some young people get easily involved with narcotics because they are listening to false friends and want to look cool. This gives them an illusion of being accepted into a group who they thin takes care of them. A belief which can end in prison time or worse, death. Drug dealers, on the other hand, are profiting from most drug offenders and taking advantage of those who are weaker against drugs.

A sex offender is an individual who is forcing sexual advancements on another person by touching or penetrating any body openings. It can be also a person who engages in sexual interactions with a minor and the offender is considered an adult. The term consensual can be tricky because every jurisdiction has different regulations who can engage in consensual sex on age. For example, if an eighteen-year-old engages in sexual activities with a sixteen- year- old, he can be already a sex offender because he is considered an adult. But an adult is also considered a sex offender, if he has sex with a child which is much younger and more vulnerable than an older individual. There is always a thin line between who to call an offender and how to judge the situation.

Since I argued already that offenders deserve a second chance, but I also said that caution should be in place where it is necessary. Not every person is capable of being responsible and taking the opportunity of showing remorse and willingness to work on their behavior. For most sex and drug offenders, prison is a hard time and other inmates see specially sex offenders as the lowest individuals in the prison system. But that is not necessarily a reason to make the offer to every offender because medical treatment, trails, or any treatment make no sense, if the participant is pretending to work on his behavior or is forced by the courts to do so. The offender should have always the opportunity to give consent to the procedures, not only to give him some autonomy of having a free will, but also to let him make the decision of taking an experimental drug which can be effective or not. Otherwise, alternative treatment plans should be in place, if the prisoner wishes to do so or the medical treatment does not show any improvements. These can be group therapies or single mental counseling sessions which are an important part of a reduced sentence agreement.

Society might be arguing what about the victims of those offenders and their families, should they not be considered, if a decision for a reduced sentence is being made. Of course, they should be taken under consideration because for them it means the offender would be leaving prison sooner and there is no guarantee that the treatment worked, even if it were predicted from each party. Questions of ethics are most likely a continuous part of this issue because the imperative, which comes from the courts, is never seen as a regular invitation to take part in medical trials and can impair greatly the decision making of offenders.

#3 In its history, modern medicine must deal with several ethical issues which were created through medicalization and even more controversial, eugenics. My argumentation goes against the prescription of unnecessary medications which can do more harm than good, and the legalization of medical experiments against the most vulnerable in our society. Suffering and illness through medicine is being enhanced by the discovery of new medications which have often dangerous side effects, and this can create further complications. Medications cure mostly the symptoms, but they do not find the origin of the illness and that leads to recurring symptoms and more intake of medicine. Physicians and the pharma industry are telling patients to take medicine because there is something wrong with them which should make sense. Sterilizing an individual on the grounds of being diagnosed feeble- minded which is a diagnosis as a default in this person’s mentally make-up should make sense in the same manner. But there is something wrong with their thinking, since it is based a lot on individuals’ opinion than on proven facts.

Insomnia, a quite common sleep disorder, is triggered by irregular sleeping patterns which of unhealthy professional and personal lifestyle. Most individuals, who are suffering from it, are on medication which they have bought themselves over the counter or were prescribed through a physician. Those medications are stimulants and have side effects, which can go from irritability to dependency on the drug and this creates another problem. A problem which was not predicted and speaks for the high tolerance rate of the medication, since the dosage must be increased to show effectiveness. Harm could be prevented, if the patients would change their lifestyle or made effort to do so. Regular sleeping patterns need to be set up and medications must be reduced or in case of dependency disappear completely. But also, in our fast-growing society, it is difficult sometimes to change as fast as one wishes, because working patterns collide often with sleeping patterns and make it adapt to a healthy routine. Reasons enough for some individuals to take medications as the only choice and continue to be a prisoner in this dependency cycle.

Eugenics, a chapter in American history which left dark shadows in the medical and research community, since it was a movement based on opinions of a few, to judge over weaker members of society and cut their rights. Sterilization was a method; eugenics thought to control feeble-minded individuals and favor the breeding of their preferred image of an individual which would be most likely of northern European descendant with a normal intelligence quotient. Everyone else was inferior and had to be erased from the breeding roaster through sterilization for the common good to save society from unworthy individuals. Charles Davenport, a eugenic researcher, conducted investigations into human inheritance, since it was a common believe a human’s traits are carried over by inheritance. Today, research shows that such an opinion is not a fact, but a belief based on racism and ignorance with many followers. Even Nazi Germany took a liking in the movement which resulted in unimaginable suffering for millions through sterilization and killing of unwanted individuals

Being different mentally and physically should not make an individual a victim to another person’s judgement based on personal belief and fabricated facts. The eugenic movement and their followers brought suffering over many people because they were allowed by society and government to do so which adds another capital to this sad chapter in medical history. A government should be made of people who have a rational mind and are capable of ethical and reasonable thinking, but in this case they failed. They were influenced by persons who found themselves with believes which were going against the values of a free country and its constitution.

#4 Every human life is worth living; therefore, it should be protected from discrimination which demands its correction or termination. One part of this essay is about genetic screening of developing embryos who could have a disorder which calls for correction or termination. The other part is about gene enhancement for purposes of intelligence or other capabilities. The answers to those topics should be considered carefully because we are dealing with human beings who are in a developing stage, but they can be regarded as persons with rights. Genetic screening has already a tradition in American history through eugenics where fully developed humans are being screened for mental and physical disorders. The results of those screenings were mass sterilizations of females who were considered feeble and not worth of reproduction. A terrible chapter of medicine and research which does not need a repetition through genetic screening of embryos. If someone would consider seriously to correct his developing child, imagine the cost for such a procedure. Only the rich could afforded it and that would leave the rest of the population out of the picture. The question of ethics, if it is right or wrong to select, should be taken more into consideration than how much does it cost.

A developing human is regarded an embryo if he is in the first eight weeks after conceiving. Most pregnancies run their normal course and are without further problems for mother and child unless the pregnancy ends in a miscarriage which happens mostly the first couple of weeks. A miscarriage can occur to a normal developing embryo without any genetic disorders and is very painful for the expecting parents. Genetic screening and correcting any developmental problems would not prevent a miscarriage because it can happen sudden and inheritance has nothing to do with it. If parents are deciding to do genetic screening, it should not be done without any medical advice from an obstetrician or gynecologist to be sure about the procedure and its result. Let us say the result comes back positive for a disorder, do I really want to correct it or even end the pregnancy. This is not an easy decision and should be considered as carefully as possible in the interest of the parents and the developing child. Down syndrome is such a genetic disorder which can be determent through genetic testing, but this should not be a reason to stop a pregnancy and get rid of the embryo. People who have the money for genetic testing, they have also the financial resources to take care of a child with a disorder, even if it means to make some sacrifices.

Enhancing intelligence and other abilities like having a perfect vision lifelong, this is still utopic for gene technology. Even if this technology exists already, would it be ethical or not. To manipulate an embryo’s genes to create a superior human being, it interferes with the natural process of development and could have a negative effect on the developing child’s emotional well-being in the future. This can create a feeling of being different than the rest of the population and make this child feel like an outsider who can become lonely and unwanted. On the other hand, a superior intelligence could lead to an advantage over other humans, if it comes to education and professional career. Would this be fair? Probably not, because this would not be through hard work, just through manipulation of the gene pool. Besides, the cost of the enhancement would be enormous and only individuals with enough money could buy it.

Humanity needs to respect itself first with all its imperfection before it can go ahead to correct itself through research and medical procedures. Medical research can revise physical errors of nature, but it does not cure our minds from judging other human beings if they are different and not fitting in our norm. The matter of personhood should be the same for every human individual and there should be equality how we are treating developing humans and their characteristics. An embryo is such a developing human who deserves respect and not a treatment like an object or worse.