

The tuskegee experiment



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The Tuskegee experiment was yet another demonstration of racial inequalities and dehumanization illustrated by a people who believed in racial superiority. The experiment was unethical and demoralizing from the beginning. The analysis was corrupt and unethical for a plethora of reasons. The experiment disregarded several basic principles of the American Sociological Association's code of ethics. Perhaps the greatest flaw in the experiment was the intended denial of treatment, which, in turn, directly affected the subject's safety, violating the code of 'protecting subjects from personal harm'. Respect the subject's right to privacy and dignity' is an additional custom in the code of ethics ignored. The researchers clearly could not even conceive the thought of respecting these "inferior racial guinea pigs", not their health, their dignity, or their humanity. The fact that these men were made a mockery of, lied to, and belittled affirms that the informed consent was nothing more than a deceitful tactic to involve the individuals.

The men were advised that they were ill and were promised care, and were not told they were participants in an experiment, which precisely disrupts the code of 'seeking informed consent when data are collected from research participants or when behavior occurs in a private context'. Though the event preceded the declaration of the informed consent notion, it is still fraudulent because of the timeline and deceptions planned and carried out by the conductors, therefore it should still be factored in, because of the depth and the fact that the participants were bamboozled.

The fact that the treatments were ineffective have nothing to do with the experiment being ethical, as far as the conductors were concerned,

treatment was out of the equation anyway, so the fact that the dosages were toxic is irrelevant. The advanced nature of the syphilis in each patient contributes to the prevailing thought that the study was not only misguided, but unscrupulous as well. These men needed immediate medical care, but the urgency was of no concern to the researchers.

The fact that these men were told they were ill (and that they were) and promised care, but were denied it, provides further evidence that experiment should have been stopped before it was even initialized, but realistically that was not going to happen. When the patients began dying off, the researchers should have stepped in, stopped the study and treated the patients, but because of the "ignorance and easily influence nature" of the subjects, they were not given treatment.

Ignorance is deemed the right term indeed, but only because the researchers left out the whole nature of the experiment. They were given placebos, food, shelter, and constant letters informing them they were being treated and followed up on. Initially, I believe the patients were, in a way, excited about the treatment, because they thought it was just that, treatment. The participants were not too quick to jump into the research though, until of course, they were given incentives, their cooperation was built on the promise of help and generosity of mankind.

As time moved forward, I believe they were still hopeful due in part to the fabrication of treatment, but maybe a bit suspicious, hence the start of the covers for burial preparations if death, in fact, struck them. As the years progressed, many participants died, from the severity of their illness, so therefore much of the primary evidence of feelings and emotions is not

known. Over time, I expect that the attitudes toward the experiment, from the perspective of the participants and outsiders, did indeed change, and not positively. In decades following, the attention became negative, angry, and impatient.

As of now, I believe people, of all races, are utterly disgusted and outraged. The fact that this continued for nearly forty years is incredible and ridiculous. Withholding information of this magnitude, which affects one's health or safety is unacceptable. In other studies, it can be accepted, because many times, knowing the intent of an experiment can alter the outcome, defined in the Hawthorne Effect. So long as the study does not inflict harm or danger to its subjects, both physically and mentally, withholding information can be justified.

When an experiment is found to be unethical or corrupt period, the information gathered should be discarded and not used or profited for the advancement of science, because that in turn, discredits science in general. If the results were to be published and interpreted, being incorrect, then future experiments and observations founded on these primitive notions will not only be invalid, but could lead to negative effects. To conclude, not only was the trail immoral and unethical, it could have potentially changed the face of science and how we look at diseases, such as syphilis itself.