

UNCATEGORIZED

# INFORMED CONSENT – WHAT ELSE?

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Ian Chalmers pointed me to a paper on [“Rethinking research ethics”](#) by Rosamond Rhodes. She basically argues that protection of the vulnerable (as a major rationale of informed consent) has been leading over the past decades to a “tangled web of research policies that are sometimes at cross-purposes with the goals that they should actually promote” with current research policies “too often limit research” and therefore promote practices that are unethical and unreasonable by being harmful, wasteful or both. She tries to make this clear with footnote 9 “Parents should certainly protect their children. But, consider the bicycle riding policy that parents would adopt if they took protection to be their primary parental responsibility. Children would not be allowed to ride bicycles because it would subject them to risk of harm” and so on.

While I am always be willing to discuss dogmas, I think that current research policies on informed consent are well developed for many reasons. Voluntary consent in a democratic society is indispensable. Full information is also vital and not only a matter of protecting vulnerables but also of respect of autonomy. Self-determination leaves the proband the choice to participate e.g. sharing the [investigators goals](#) or not. Of course we should recognize when “informed consent” is perverted by just filling in another form. With a few exceptions there is no excuse for not having asked for full informed consent.

I am even shivering by her view “if the Nazi doctors”™ only ethical failure in their treatment of human subjects involved lack of informed consent, their behaviour would have been no worse than that of their fellow scientists around the world”. Does she really want to affront scientist around the world? Or does she want to downplay the atrocities of the Nazis?

Coming back to her example – has she ever heard about bike helmets? It is my responsibility to minimize harm for the individual, while allowing movement forward. Yea, yea.

*Analyzing the log files for this site, I found this page is retrieved frequently every day. Maybe I should expand on this topic?*

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