

Neuroenhancement technology: an ethical analysis and study of the conditions for research and clinical trials.

A project funded by the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research (G.0048.07)
01/01/2007-31/12/2010.

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Aim and objectives:

The emergence of new treatments which have the capacity to profoundly alter or influence mood and cognition is considered by some as one of the most promising as well as most challenging developments of the 21st century within the life sciences (Wolp, 2002). Aside of other socially relevant aspects of current neuroscience (e.g. 'brain reading') and its technological tools (e.g. fMRI, TMS, PET), it is in particular the discussions regarding ethical and social implications of neuroenhancement technology which are giving rise to the gradual development of 'neuroethics'. Some of the most pertinent concerns which shape this emerging domain include questions as to how this technology relates to the general goals of medicine and what the conditions for research and clinical trials should be. While the need for a thorough exploration of the social and ethical implications of enhancement technology is generally well acknowledged, scarce attention has gone out to the question if and under what conditions such research should be supported.

The aims of the research proposal are the following:

- (1) to provide an overview of the current developments and results within neuroenhancement technology;
- (2) to obtain thorough insight in the academic, social and policy debates surrounding these developments;
- (3) to conduct a conceptual analysis of the conflict between 'normal', 'healthy' mental functioning and 'enhanced' functioning, both in terms of strictly medical as well as medical ethical standards;
- (4) to conduct a comparative, medical ethical study of the conditions for acceptance of this and other forms of enhancement technology; and
- (5) to apply the results obtained from the analyses to the current context of neuroenhancement technology.

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