



Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Section - 2014

I11 Current Status of Clinical Research in Correctional Settings — A Review

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand some basic principles of clinical research in correctional settings. The encumbrances involved in the consent process and the obstacles encountered in conducting research in such settings will be discussed. This presentation will also enlist some potential advantages and gains to the subjects and to society in general.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by pointing out ramifications and implications of conducting biomedical and psychological research on inmates. The research community's benefit will be to gain ample understanding of variations in research procedures, current trends, and thinking of conducting research and **Institutional Review Board (IRB)** governance for this population, which is considered to be vulnerable. Incarcerated individuals have very high prevalences of drug abuse, alcoholism, HIV, hepatitis, and mental illness. By being able to conduct research with this population, it is hoped to advance the field in terms of new diagnostic and treatment modalities.

Research in correctional settings has always been considered controversial. On one hand, this is a set of individuals who have lost their liberty and are therefore deemed to be unable to give informed consent; on the other hand, there is potentially a wealth of clinical information that could be discovered if researched appropriately. Inmates in correctional settings can be surprisingly agreeable and amenable to clinical research for a variety of reasons while incarcerated. Also, there are several diseases, such as Hepatitis C, HIV, and conditions such as alcoholism and substance abuse, which are rampant in these populations. These findings suggest that extensive research is needed and appropriate.

In general, clinical research requires voluntary informed consent. However, working with inmates in correctional settings raises several ethical and legal dilemmas. Since this research is working with a subset of the population who have lost significant freedoms, it has been pointed out that any consent offered with respect to clinical and experimental research cannot be completely voluntary.

While there are potentially many rewards of conducting research in correctional settings, it is critically important to have extensive and special safeguards in place in order to properly achieve this goal. For example, a specialized IRB, which understands and is sensitive to protecting the rights of incarcerated individuals, is extremely important. The IRB should be constituted by especially experienced personnel who are able to evaluate protocols and, at the same time, assure subjects' rights and safety. The formation of such a committee is vital in order to minimize coercion during the informed consent process.

Clinical Research, Correctional Settings, Patient Safety