Is it Ethical to Choose for Patients?
“Nudges” in Research and Practice

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Behavioral economics has shown that “nudges” – i.e. non-rational influences on decisions – can be used to affect individuals’ choices in ways that might be good for them. Some experts have argued for using such nudges in medicine, and a good deal of research in this area is under way. At the same time, the use of nudges has been attacked as paternalistic and failing to respect patient autonomy. Some of the concern stems from the fact that non-rational factors are being used to encourage decisions that might have poor outcomes for at least some individuals. These dangers are described during this analysis of the ethics of using nudges in research and clinical practice.

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