Dialogue 3

Should 'Good Science' be an Ethical Requirement by IRB's?

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12 Noon, Friday, Nov. 19, 1999
Rosenstiel Medical Science Building 3109

Lunch will be provided

IRBs are made up predominantly of scientists looking at other scientists’ research proposals. A comment often heard in IRB meetings is, “We have no business scrutinizing a study’s research design. We are only supposed to look for ethical breaches.” This claim amounts to the view that once a scientist has designed an experiment, the IRB’s job is to make sure it conforms to regulations concerning ethical involvement of human subjects in research. This is a mistake: Unless IRBs specifically scrutinize research design, a large part of their ethical mandate cannot be carried out.

Ben Mulvey is an Associate Professor of Philosophy and Director of Liberal Arts at Nova Southeastern University, where he teaches bioethics. He serves on a number of ethics committees and has just concluded a three-year term as Vice-Chair of Nova Southeastern University’s IRB.

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