STORY

Review Highlights Unethical Moments in Medical Research History

3/01/2011

http://www.pbs.org/newshour/extra/features/world/jan-june11/experimentation_03-01.html

Estimated Time: One 45-minute class period with possible extension

Student Worksheet also included (reading comprehension and discussion questions without answers)

PROCEDURE

1. WARM UP
Use initiating questions to introduce the topic and find out how much your students know.

2. MAIN ACTIVITY
Have students read NewsHour Extra's feature story and answer the reading comprehension and discussion questions on the student handout.

3. DISCUSSION
Use discussion questions to encourage students to think about how the issues outlined in the story affect their lives and express and debate different opinions.

INITIATING QUESTIONS

1. Why is medical testing necessary?

2. What are medical ethics?

3. What is the Hippocratic Oath and why does it matter?

READING COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What medical principle do the recently discovered studies violate?
   The studies violated the "first do no harm" medical principle that stretches back centuries.

2. What is the most famous medical study that crossed ethical lines?
   The Tuskegee Syphilis study

3. What ‘miracle drug’ used to treat syphilis was discovered in 1947?
   Penicillin

4. How long was the syphilis study kept secret and when was it leaked to the press?
   The study went on for 40 years and was kept secret from the public until 1972, when a former Health Service employee leaked the story to the press.
5. Which U.S. President issued an apology for the study in 1997?
President Bill Clinton

6. How were the medical experiments done in Guatemala worse than the Tuskegee study?
They intentionally infected healthy people with syphilis in order to study them.

7. In what African country did U.S. doctors withhold AIDS drugs for HIV-infected women?
Uganda

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the Associated Press report, the reporter compares the studies on prisoners and poor people to experiments conducted on Jews by the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s. What are the similarities and differences between the attitudes of the researchers and the Nazi doctors?

2. How can medical testing be conducted ethically?

3. Why do you think that at the time, doctors and researchers failed to speak out about or acknowledge the ethics violations going on in these studies?
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