

## Enforced Vaccinations? The Ethical Dilemma...

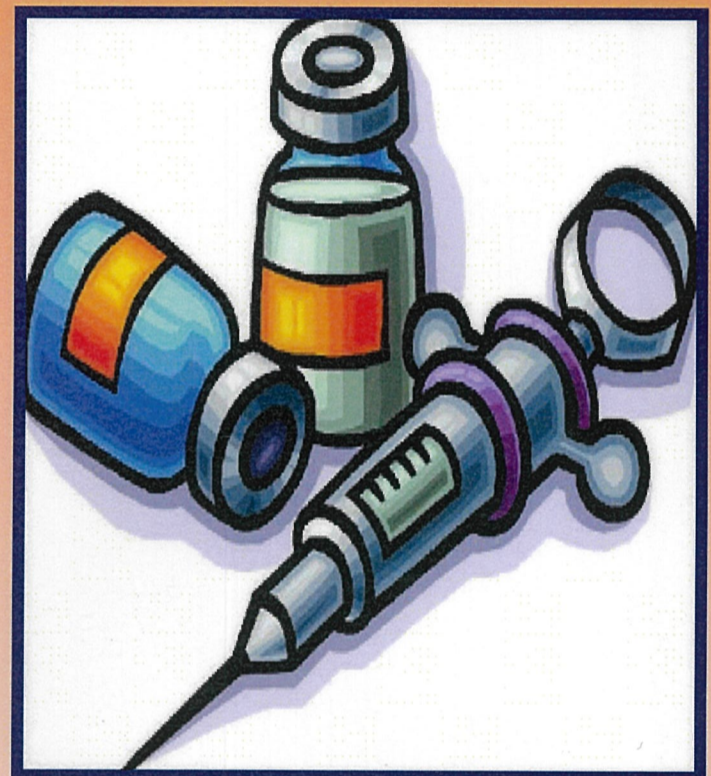
**Introduction:** The topic I have chosen is an ethical dilemma I believe all nurses will eventually come across, in regards to the consent needed in the care of patient with a mental health diagnosis. For example; in a dementia ward where it is not uncommon for vaccinations to be compulsory whether the patient approves or not. Patients often are prescribe vaccinations whether they agree or not and may be force to have them. Conditions of the dementia ward is that vaccinations are compulsory, but is enforcing them against the NZNO Code of Conduct?

**Question:** Does the rule of informed consent apply to psychiatric patients– Particularly those in a locked care facility

### Findings:

- On some occasions, such as when vaccinations are a requirement of the inpatient ward, then yes, it is ethical to ignore the rule of informed consent.
- The nurse must hold to account the wellbeing of the entire ward. If that means giving everyone a vaccination such as the flu shot then that is the most ethical choice
- For the greater health care of all the residence within the ward, vaccinations are vital.
- Patients and their families are notified of these condition on enrollment into the facility.

(Beebe, Smith 2008& Hem, Heggen, Ruyter 2007& O'Brien 2010)



(Google Images 2014)

### Recommendations:

- Build on the patients understanding of why vaccinations are important– not only for them but for the entire ward. Remember that they may not have the capacity to make the best decision for themselves.
- Focus on what would better for the majority of people, even if it means enforcing vaccinations. This will keep the majority of patient healthier and be better for their wellbeing.
- Make an effort to gauge the patients level of comprehension of what is going on. This can assist in developing a mutual understanding.

(Beebe, Smith 2008& Hem, Heggen, Ruyter 2007& O'Brien 2010)

**Conclusion:** On some occasions, the most ethical thing to do is to bypass the rule of informed consent. This only applies if the patient is not capable of making the best decision for themselves to go give truly informed consent, and it is a big responsibility that the nurse must be willing to take on. We can ease this situation for ourselves and the patients by building on their understanding and being aware of their level of comprehension.

### References:

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PECOT category	Information relating to question	Explanation
Population	Elderly Patients (65+years) who suffered from dementia and are kept in a locked care facility.	Patients are sometimes prescribed vaccinations weather they agree to it or not. 65 years and older are the more common ages for dementia to strike.
Exposure (intervention)	Dementia patients are given a flu vaccine, weather they have given informed consent or not.	We will be looking for articles that address the dilemma faced by nurses when vaccinating a patient that is not able to make an appropriate decision for themselves. Is it ethical to vaccinate them without their permissions for the greater good or does it go beyond the nurse's Code of Conduct?
Comparison / Control	Not vaccinating the patient and potentially causing an outbreak within the ward compared to forced vaccinations for the greater good of the patients.	Is it against the nurse's code of conduct and crossing ethical boundaries to give these patients vaccinations or is it done for the greater good by preventing a flu outbreak.
Outcome	A flu free ward because of the forced vaccinations	We want to know if it is ok to enforce treatment on mental health patients in order to keep them and others in better health.