INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH ETHICS BY UDO SCHÜKLENK.

Udo Schüklenk's article, "Introduction to Research Ethics," presents a detailed look at the ethical frameworks and tenets that steer choices in studies that involve people. This essay shows the importance of understanding the historical and legal context around research ethics. Schüklenk presents three main ethical frameworks, such as ethics based upon principles, deontological ethics, and utilitarian ethics, and each framework offers up a different way of looking at how to make ethical decisions throughout research. These specific systems can assist many researchers in dealing with tricky ethical problems that may crop up while doing several studies that involve people.

This structure is mostly based upon these four key ideas: independence, doing good, actively avoiding harm, and overall fairness. Each such principle acts as a guideline for researchers to make ethically sound decisions as they balance the rights and interests of people with the overall collective well-being.

Autonomy stresses how important it is to respect someone's right to choose about their own life and body. In research, in addition to supporting the idea of informed consent, this principle involves participants willingly agreeing to partake in a study after being totally informed of the research's nature, as well as any connected risks.

Beneficence truly requires researchers to act. They must act in ways that greatly promote the well being of others. This principle encourages researchers to create studies helpful to participants or society as a whole and to behave in ways improving positive outcomes.

Non-maleficence sincerely requires averting overall harm. Researchers must guarantee that their studies don't cause needless physical, psychological, or emotional hurt to the people in them, and they must lessen any risks that might come up because of them.

Justice demands treating participants fairly and equally. This principle stresses the importance of guaranteeing that the benefits as well as burdens from research are distributed equitably, along that vulnerable populations are not exploited by it.

While these principles present a useful structure for making ethical decisions, Schüklenk indicates that using these principles in practice can be a bit difficult. There's no natural hierarchy amongst these tenets, so investigators could face scenarios where a couple of them are in conflict. For example, in a specific scenario where respecting autonomy could result in harm to participants, the researcher might genuinely battle to decide which guiding principle should truly take precedence. This absence of hierarchy can make ethical decision-making more complex. It also requires balancing competing interests, and values, in a context-specific manner.

Deontological ethics focuses on moral duties as well as obligations, asserting that certain actions are intrinsically right or wrong regardless of their outcomes. According to deontologists, ethical behaviour is determined via one's adherence to moral duties, such as telling the truth or honouring promises, instead of the outcomes of those actions. This ethical perspective places an important emphasis on intentions and moral commitments. As an example, researchers have an ethical responsibility to support informed consent and honesty principles, even if the results of what they do might not lead to the most benefit. Deontological ethics is rather important in medical and research settings, in which it is primarily to protect participants' rights and dignity. Schüklenk does, however, mention that in practical use, deontological ethics, much like principle-based ethics, has issues. A major issue concerns the potential clash between differing duties. For example, researchers could encounter many situations where each ethical duty, like protecting a participant's privacy, could clash with another, like the responsibility to share certain discoveries for the benefit of the public. Working out which responsibility needs to come first during these kinds of situations can be tough. A key feature of deontological ethics is its emphasis on human dignity. It asserts that every individual possesses natural worth within themselves and must be treated as an end in themselves, not simply to an end. Also, deontological ethics turns down any moral relativism, the concept that ethical judgements can differ depending on cultural context or personal belief. Instead, deontologists argue that moral principles must be applicable throughout, regardless of the different social or cultural norms.

Despite its strengths, deontological ethics faces large criticism for being quite rigid and not sufficiently flexible for accounting for the many complexities of actual situations. Researchers occasionally encounter such thorny dilemmas when following a certain moral duty always leads to harm or injustice, and deontological ethics does not offer especially clear guidance on how to resolve those conflicts.

Utilitarianism, in effect, is a consequentialist theory, with the implication that the morality in an action gets determined by way of its consequences. The main tenet of utilitarianism concerns proper action increasing general gladness or welfare for many people. In research ethics, this signifies that a study's advantages should be more important than the risks and burdens faced by participants. Researchers must weigh up the possible harms against the possible benefits from the research and guarantee during the study that the research produces more good than harm. Utilitarianism is particularly relevant in the design as well as the conduct of research studies; as such, it requires that researchers assess, in a thorough manner, the potential outcomes of their actions in addition to thinking over whether the benefits of the research sufficiently justify certain risks to participants. As an example, in the event of a study that aims at the development of a life-saving treatment, though there are risks to participant health, utilitarianism will support the study assuming the possible benefits for society outweigh the individual risks. However, Schüklenk points out some criticisms of utilitarianism. The main issue is that utilitarianism can allow actions that harm people if most benefit from them. For example, a study causing large harm for a small group of participants might be justified by the greater good provided to a much larger population. This can spark worries regarding the protection of individual rights in addition to the potential exploitation of vulnerable groups for the benefit of others.

Statutes establish many obligatory rules for researchers. Several ethical guidelines offer suggestions for moral judgment. Occasionally, ethical guidelines can be more stringent than legal rules. This is especially obvious in areas such as informed consent, participant privacy, as well as harm reduction. Researchers are urged by others to stick with both ethical tenets and legal rules for making certain of top-notch ethical behaviour. This framework provides a step-by-step way of handling moral problems while doing research. The initial step consists of the identification of

the ethical problem at hand. It involves the determination of whether the issue exists as a genuinely ethical dilemma. Not all difficult situations are about ethics. One needs to assess whether ethical principles can help in resolving the issue at hand. The second step includes gathering relevant facts, which means collecting useful info about the context, the people involved, and any applicable rules or regulations. This aids in making certain that decisions stem from precise info. Decisions are born of thorough info too. A further step is to contemplate multiple constraints, like legal limitations, resource availability, or cultural norms, that could affect decision-making. The fourth step involves, additionally identifying, the specific ethical values in the situation, along with principles such as autonomy, beneficence, and justice. Researchers should consider the ethical values quite relevant to the problem, along with the clarity of such values throughout decision-making. The subsequent step fully involves determining the specific type of ethical problem at hand, and deciding which ethical theory (principle-based, deontological, or utilitarian) is most particularly applicable. The final step means arriving at a logical judgement from the earlier steps. This conclusion needs to be the result of large ethical reasoning. It also needs to be open to further discussion and review. Although the conclusion might not be accepted by all, it should show commitment to ethical ideals and a mindful view of the circumstances.

The article thoroughly highlights the importance of the comprehension of legal and ethical guidelines and duly stresses the need for researchers to analytically evaluate these frameworks when navigating complex moral dilemmas. It is suggested that researchers apply these moral concepts, regularly prioritizing participant welfare, and guaranteeing their work complies with moral and legal standards.

References:

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