11. ETHICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR IMPOSING ANTI-TUBERCULOSIS TREATMENT IN PRISONS

Author: Ana-Maria Gherman

Scientific adviser: Viorel Cojocaru, PhD Medical Sciences, Department of Philosophy and Bioethics, *Nicolae Testemitanu* State University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.

Introduction. The transmission of tuberculosis continues to thrive within prison walls, with prevalence estimated to be up to 17 times higher than in the general population. The main causes contributing to the transmission of treatment-resistant strains and limiting tuberculosis control remain: delayed detection of new cases, poor contact tracing, overcrowding, inadequate treatment of infectious cases, poor hygiene, and poor implementation of Mycobacterium tuberculosis infection control measures.

Aim of study. To analyze the ethical principles that can justify limiting the autonomy of prisoners by imposing anti-tuberculosis treatment, with the aim of protecting public health in the prison environment.

Methods and materials. This study is a synthesis of WHO data and recent research on tuberculosis in prisons. We looked at how bioethical principles, such as autonomy or non-maleficence, harmonize with the legal obligations of the state. The analysis balances the need for treatment with compliance with international ethical standards.

Results. Refusal of treatment for a contagious disease is no longer a simple private choice, especially in prisons, where group safety limits individual autonomy. Ethics is an inseparable part of medicine, as doctors have an ethical obligation to benefit patients, avoid or minimize harm, and respect patients' values and preferences. However, forcing therapy remains an extreme measure, strictly conditioned by the severity of the risk and respect for human dignity.

Conclusions. Imposing treatment in prisons is justified only as a last resort, to avoid imminent public danger. Even then, any measure must respect the dignity of the prisoner. Currently, a balance is sought between bioethics and human rights, protecting collective health without negating the value of the individual.

Keywords. Tuberculosis, Ethical standards, Prisons, Collective health.

https://doi.org/10.66603/medespera2026.216