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Compulsory moral bioenhancement should be covert

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PMID: 30157295 DOI: [10.1111/bioe.12496](#)

Abstract

Some theorists argue that moral bioenhancement ought to be compulsory. I take this argument one step further, arguing that if moral bioenhancement ought to be compulsory, then its administration ought to be covert rather than overt. This is to say that it is morally preferable for compulsory moral bioenhancement to be administered without the recipients knowing that they are receiving the enhancement. My argument for this is that if moral bioenhancement ought to be compulsory, then its administration is a matter of public health, and for this reason should be governed by public health ethics. I argue that the covert administration of a compulsory moral bioenhancement program better conforms to public health ethics than does an overt compulsory program. In particular, a covert compulsory program promotes values such as liberty, utility, equality, and autonomy better than an overt program does. Thus, a covert compulsory moral bioenhancement program is morally preferable to an overt moral bioenhancement program.

Keywords: autonomy; harm; moral enhancement; public health ethics; public policy.

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