



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# An Anti-Oxidant Compound to Slow Progression of Alzheimer's Disease

## Author(s)

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2000

## Description

A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about the ethical issues that arise when study designs must include placebo controls and lengthy participation by Alzheimer's patients.

## Body

Previous studies indicate that vitamin E, also an anti-Oxidant, enables AD patients to live an estimated six months longer than a placebo group. These patients also had slightly better control of bodily functions (including bowel and bladder). This study will examine a new anti-Oxidant that may slow the progression of AD. In this study, patients/subjects are required to remain on this compound until death. Their longevity will be compared with a control group receiving a placebo.

Family members must agree to maintain anti-Oxidant use throughout all stages of the disease progression. Subjects are not allowed to take any cholinesterase inhibitors or other anti-dementia drugs during the study, which uses a placebo control.

- Why might it not be ethical to require subjects to stay on this compound

- throughout the entire course of the disease, including the advanced stage?
- What would be the therapeutic goals of slowing progression of the disease?
  - What do you think about the non-use of symptomatic anti-dementia drugs in subjects and controls?

## **Notes**

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

## **Contributor(s)**

Caroline Whitbeck

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## **Parent Collection**

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## **Topics**

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