NUFFIELD COUNCIL ON BIOETHICS

Call for evidence – neurotechnology

Opens	17 October 2024
Closes	2 January 2025
Questions/submissions to	mindandbrain@nuffieldbioethics.org

Why we are calling for evidence

The Nuffield Council on Bioethics (NCOB) is running an open call for evidence to inform its work exploring the development and use of neurotechnologies in healthcare contexts. Our work on neurotechnology seeks to understand how the landscape has changed since the publication of our 2013 report on novel neurotechnologies, and whether the ethical framework within that report needs to be updated. This call for evidence is part of a series of evidence gathering activities including a literature review and expert interviews.

What we are looking for

We are looking for evidence in relation to the ethical issues that have been identified in the literature review and our stakeholder engagement to date. Specifically, we would be grateful for evidence on the following:

- How surgical implants, prostheses or non-biological devices, used for therapeutic purposes, affect individuals' or communities' sense of **identity**
- **(In)voluntariness** in terms of patient choice about cessation of treatment for either clinical or non-clinical reasons
- Other **impacts** on patients, or healthcare systems, of **planned and stratified obsolescence** of other (non-neuro) medtech, such as implants and devices, and/or software upon which such technologies run
- **Therapeutic benefit** and whether its conceptualisation and measurement differs between novel medtech and other, more established, forms of medical intervention
- The **role of possibility, promise and hope** in the promotion and use of (non-neuro) medtech, and other novel treatments/therapeutic interventions, and whether potential harms/benefits are well-evidenced or communicated
- **Current policies, protocols** and/or **guidance** for healthcare professionals prescribing and/or implanting neurotechnologies, and communicating with patients about them

(within the UK or other comparable countries), and any areas where future policy/guidance might be useful
- **Potential impacts on regulatory policy and practice** of expanding medtech (including neurotech) approval criteria to include manufacturer business continuity
- Any data available about the impact of **current research funding on research and development** of safe neurotechnologies within the UK, or limitations on wider implementation/adoption of safe neurotechnologies in the UK where they were developed overseas
- Any data available about the impact of **regulatory policy and practice on research and development** of safe neurotechnologies in the UK
- The **suitability of extant neurotechnology taxonomies proposed** and in use across the UK and comparable countries
- Case studies, data or other examples about patients undertaking **self-maintenance or DIY modification** of their own neurotechnologies for any reason
- Any other ethical issues or challenges relevant to development and use of neurotechnologies

We also welcome any evidence on specific neurotechnologies with a therapeutic purpose that has not been included within our work to date, or that updates the insights or framework set out in our 2013 report.

Please note that some questions may require specific subject matter expertise or experience to answer – there is no need to answer questions that fall outside your own professional, personal or academic scope.

Who should respond to the call for evidence

Responses are welcomed from any individual or organisation with professional (including academic, industrial, clinical and third sector), research or lived experience in relation to any of the evidence we seek.

Examples of individuals that may have useful evidence to contribute are neuroscientists, researchers in academia or industry, patients and experts by experience, neurologists and neurosurgeons, medtech software developers, philosophers/ethicists and legal/regulatory experts.

Examples of organisations that may have useful evidence to contribute are disability and/or mental health charities, patient advocacy groups, research consortia, professional and systems regulatory bodies, research funders, specialist healthcare providers/centres and manufacturers of neurotechnologies.

What we will do with the evidence

We will carefully consider and analyse all responses to the call for evidence. A summary of insights will be published on our website, and the themes and issues identified will inform the trajectory of our further work on neurotechnology. We may publish some responses in full, or use verbatim extracts from them, but only where you have given us explicit consent to do so.

Responding to the call for evidence

The call for evidence will be open from 17 October 2024 to 2 January 2025. Responses should be in the written word and sent as an email attachment to mindandbrain@nuffieldbioethics.org.

Please state clearly in your email if you are happy for us to publish your response in full, and, if so, whether you would like us to publish it under your/your organisation's name or anonymously.