Abstract

The conventional biomedical concept of the human subject is out of step with World Health Organizations (WHO) holistic definition of health. The human subject in international and national research-ethics policies is a highly individualistic, autonomous person, in contrast to WHO's holistic definition of the healthy person. Qualitative research, this paper suggests, offers a way out of this conundrum. We need to reconceptualize the human subject in line with WHO's holistic definition of health. The paper offers concepts of research participants derived from qualitative research as an essential way to reconceptualize the human subject. Moreover, field work, or ethnographic research, as undertaken by qualitative researchers presents a useful way of gaining a fuller understanding of issues of health in a given population.

Keywords

The subject, WHO, Ethics, Health
research, Qualitative research