

SPACE LIFE SCIENCES SYMPOSIUM (A1)  
Medical Care for Humans in Space (3)Author: Dr. Nikki Coleman  
UNSW Australia, AustraliaIS VALID CONSENT POSSIBLE FOR ASTRONAUTS AND SPACE TOURISTS INVOLVED IN  
MEDICAL RESEARCH?**Abstract**

Researchers wishing to do medical experimentation in most western countries must undergo an ethics approval process in order to mitigate risks to both the researcher and the research subjects. Part of this ethics approval process is to ensure that valid consent, sometimes referred to as “informed consent”, has been obtained. This consent approval process is to ensure that research subjects who are taking part in research fully understand the risks and benefits of participation, have not been coerced to take part, and are mentally competent to give consent. Vulnerable populations such as children, the elderly and disabled people are given particular attention during the ethics approval process. Recently there has been an increasing awareness of other vulnerable populations where there is a power imbalance between those being researched upon and researchers (or due to institutional factors). Prison inmates, cancer patients and military personnel have all been identified as being vulnerable populations in regards to medical research and as such special consideration is given to the ethical issues raised when they participate in medical research. Astronauts and military personnel are similar in that they have “signed up” for dangerous duties in the service of their country, and have limited rights in regards to refusing medical treatment. This paper discusses some of the ethical issues raised by enrolling astronauts and space tourists in medical research during training and space flights, as well as the after care of these medical research participants.