



Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri

NATIONAL BIOETHICS COMMITTEE

BIOETHICS AND REHABILITATION

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abstract

The opinion deals with the subject of rehabilitation of people with disabilities in general and related bioethical issues, it highlights not only the medical aspects of rehabilitation but also the psychological and social aspects. "Rehabilitation" is defined as a union of both therapeutic (cure) and assistance (care) interventions, whose objective is the recovery (whether partial or total) of compromised abilities caused by congenital or acquired pathologies and the improvement of existent capabilities (sensorial, motor, or psychological) in order to permit and attain greater family and social inclusion of the disabled person. The document emphasises how bioethical thought on this subject calls into question various levels: anthropological (the determining of the significance of corporeality and the human person); and ethical (the identification of benchmarks for healthcare workers and the disabled person); legal (the identification of the person with disabilities as an individual with rights); and politico-social (the planning of resources intended for rehabilitation and social-inclusion).

Initiating with the analysis made at these levels, the NBC formulates several observations and recommendations. The ethos of the experience of disability is the body, to be perceived not as an "object" seized in its mere physicality, but as "corporeality", a constitutive dimension of a person's identity. Disability – being an experience of the limit considered a component part of human life – should be seen not as an expression of what is missing, but rather as a means to enhance the value of what is possessed. The document promotes an "integral" ethical approach, which takes into consideration the wholeness of the person to be rehabilitated in an "educational" and dynamic type of process that operates by involving all concerned in an extended "rehabilitative" alliance. In this perspective it is fundamental to give support to the family, especially when children with disabilities are involved. The NBC points out the importance of the detection of consensus regarding the rehabilitative process with particular attention being paid to the content of the information and its intended recipients. In addition, it also deals with the issue of the limit separating rehabilitative "insistence" from "persistence".

On the basis of these principles, the NBC recommends that the right to rehabilitation of the disabled person should always be recognised and supported; society should make cultural and economic commitments relating to their care and rehabilitation; there should be adequate attention to provide the healthcare workers involved in rehabilitation with a "comprehensive" formation, not restricted only to technical and scientific aspects; strong support should be given to associations and volunteers caring for disabled persons and their families; and lastly, the establishment of a social culture of rehabilitation centred on the acceptance and inclusion of the disabled should be promoted.