



MEDICINE 2040

Rewriting the future of healthcare

AM I MY PATIENT'S KEEPER? ETHICAL ASPECTS OF DRUG INNOVATION

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In 2017, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a digital pill (DP) technology. This pill, embedded with a sensor, provides doctors with data relevant to the patient's medication compliance. Patients taking the DP, a version of the antipsychotic Abilify, sign consent forms allowing their doctors and up to four other people, including family members, to receive electronic data tracking the patient's medication compliance. The data are transmitted via Bluetooth to a database that physicians and other authorized users can access. The ethical aspects of implementing DP technology include the impact of the DP technology on the physician-patient covenant which is currently practiced in precise time and location dimensions (primarily during the time of an appointment in the physician's clinic). New ethical questions arise as a result of this continuous monitoring, such as: are physicians obligated to be continuously available and responsive to the patient's behaviors and condition? Do the data which are continuously generated create a new medical responsibility? We claim that DP technology is a disruptive technology with direct impacts on the current ethical and legal patient-caregiver relationship. Accordingly, new policies and safety standards must be established before DP technologies are widely introduced into the market.