ROLE PLAYING INSTRUCTIONS: ETHICS COMMISSION

You all are part of an ethics committee hearing. Some of the participants draw role cards and are heard during the game. The remainder will take on the role of the Commissioners and will have a say in the Council’s decision.

The Commission meets because a patient suffers from the side effects of an implant for deep brain stimulation and has therefore been admitted to a psychiatric hospital. The aim of the hearing is to decide whether or not to switch off the equipment. Each of the cardholders is heard and questions may be asked by the Commission and other cardholders. In the end, the Commission discusses and votes on whether or not to switch off the device.

This role-playing game is based on a true case that has been widely discussed in the neuroethics community. There is no right or wrong decision by the Commission — it depends on the participants’ arguments. Which argument convinced the Commission?
You got Parkinson’s disease at a young age. The illness has weighed heavily on you. Three years ago, your doctor suggested that you have an operation. You agree and receive an electrode implant in your brain. You were afraid of the elaborate surgery, but everything went well. After getting used to it, you feel good about the device and symptoms such as shaking have completely disappeared. After a while you start to develop a habit that you never had before: your desire to gamble turns into a gambling addiction. You get heavily into debt and you are not longer able to control your behavior. Nonetheless, you feel great in your own skin. After spending several months in an in-patient psychiatric clinic to treat your gambling addiction, your zest for life has not paled.

YOUR INTERESTS AND CHARACTERISTICS
To remain mobile; zest for life; a happy family; a good environment; a long life; financial security; self-confidence
You have been treating Parkinson’s disease patients for ten years. After his or her symptoms such as shaking or muscular paralysis increasingly impair his or her daily life, you suggested deep brain stimulation, an electrode implanted in the brain through a brain operation. The operation goes well, but following the procedure, your patient develops a gambling addiction. After trying out a combination of possibilities, you transfer him or her to a psychiatric clinic.

**YOUR INTERESTS AND CHARACTERISTICS**

That your patient can live as healthy as possible and as long as possible with a high standard of living; you wish to continue the patient’s care, receive further payments and maintain the well being of the patient’s family and friends along with your own reputation.
You have been married to a Parkinson’s patient for over 20 years. When he or she first told you he has Parkinson’s, you were shocked. You have always supported him or her during treatments — both financially and emotionally. Although it was difficult for the partner to live with the symptoms at first, the operation in which your partner received a brain implant changed everything for you: your partner’s gambling addiction and massive behavioral changes put you to the test. The financial situation for your family is tense because he or she has limited options to work. Your partner is transferred to a psychiatric clinic due to his or her difficulties. He or she seems to feel good there, but you want to have him or her back and wish that your partner was like he or she was before the operation.

YOUR INTERESTS AND CHARACTERISTICS
Your own quality of life; a happy family life; a happy relationship with your partner; financial security; independence
You have been in office for two years and next year you are up for reelection in the parliament. You have caught wind of this particular case and wish to represent the taxpayers’ interests. You know that a long-term in-patient treatment is much more expensive than it would be to turn off the stimulation device in his or her brain.

YOUR INTERESTS/PARTY PLATFORM
Lighten health insurance’s burden; enable and finance effective, sensible treatment; create jobs and patient mobility; social justice; convince as many voters as possible
YOU ARE THE PATIENT’S FRIEND

You and the patient have been best friends for 30 years. You used to sit next to each other in school and later you shared an apartment. You meet regularly and talk on the phone often. When you heard about your friend’s Parkinson’s disease, you were shocked. As his or her symptoms such as shaking and muscular paralysis worsened and his or her doctor suggested an elaborate operation for implanting an electrode into his or her brain, you encouraged your friend to do it. The operation went well, but your friend has changed a lot since then: sometimes you barely recognize him or her. Besides, you are worried that he or she seems to have developed a gambling addiction. You are in contact with your friend’s spouse because you have just learned that your friend has been transferred to a psychiatric clinic. He or she apparently feels good there, but is that really a long-term solution?

YOUR INTERESTS

Your long-standing friendship; quality of life and health for your friend; improving your friend’s mobility
Your specialty is medical engineering. Together with your colleagues, you have developed an electrode model that can be implanted in a Parkinson’s patient’s brain during an elaborate operation. The patient is part of a clinical study that could mean the next medical breakthrough. You are satisfied because the operation was successful and led to the patient’s symptoms clearly retreating. After all, that was your research goal all along! Apparently, the patient’s personality has changed since the procedure. Luckily, he or she could be helped in a psychiatric institution.

**YOUR INTERESTS**

To help patients; develop new electrodes; improve the use of electrodes; learn more about effects and functions of the brain; get results and research funding; maintain your own reputation
As a small company, you are trying to make a name for yourself and to establish your method for deep brain stimulation. You developed the patient’s electrode system and your success is dependent on the results of the clinical study.

YOUR INTERESTS
Your company’s success; the further employment of your employees; the product’s success; client satisfaction; investor satisfaction; doctor satisfaction; maintain your health insurance license
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DOCUMENT:
Role play instructions and role cards

RETRIEVED FROM:
www.nexusexperiments.uni-freiburg.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Selbstversuche/Selbstversuche__Rollenspiel_EN_01.pdf

The role play was developed within the Nexus Experiments project »Hirn-Strips. Neurotechnology graphically told«. Nexus Experiments develops and curates innovative formats of science communication and reflection at the interface of science, art and ethics.

EDITORS:
Mathilde Bessert-Nettelbeck and Sabrina Livaneč

FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS TO:
nexus@brainlinks-braintools.uni-freiburg.de

IMPRESSIONS:
www.nexusexperiments.uni-freiburg.de/en/experiment/projekt/26/

LINKS:
www.nexusexperiments.uni-freiburg.de
www.brainlinks-braintools.uni-freiburg.de
www.bcf.uni-freiburg.de