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Responsibility: A “first person ethics” for vaccination

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The debate over compulsory or merely recommended vaccination remains open, albeit latent, in those countries that have mandatory vaccine schedules. Despite the advantages of preventive immunization from the point of medical, economic and social features, it's clear, in the current status of medical ethics, that the exercise of patient autonomy calls for personal responsibility in the election of treatments and, in fact, the vaccines. Therefore, it is necessary to change the simple idea of prevention as “risk reduction”, characteristic of a “third person ethic” in order to pass to a preventative medicine concept that will be able to support the achievement of moral attitudes towards achieving the good “health” for the individual and for the community. This is only possible from a “first person ethic” wherever is possible to present an alternative between mandatory vs. recommendation from the concept of “responsibility” that, with the help of a series of measures, could combine the effective protection for the whole community with the responsible exercise of the personal autonomy.

Biography

Fermin J Gonzalez-Melado (Badajoz, 1970) is a diocesan catholic priest of the Archdiocese of Merida-Badajoz (Spain). He completed his ecclesiastical studies at the Seminary of his hometown, obtaining a degree in theology from the University of Salamanca (Salamanca). He is MSc (Biology) from the University of Extremadura, Master in Bioethics from the University of Navarra (Pamplona), ThM in Theology of Marriage and Family at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute (Rome-Washington). He is a member of the Spanish Association of Bioethics (AEBI) and has published several articles on scientific journals. His Doctoral thesis is an ethical reflection on life-sustaining treatments in children with spinal muscular atrophy type 1. He's now working as full Professor on Moral Theology and Bioethics at Centro Superior de Estudios Teológicos - Badajoz (Pontifical University of Salamanca).

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