

Brain stimulation for treatment and enhancement in children:

trade-offs, open futures, and ethical limits to parental proxy decision-making

Dr Hannah Maslen

Research Fellow in Ethics

The Uehiro Centre for Practical Ethics, University of Oxford

There have been calls for “extreme caution” in the use of non-invasive brain stimulation (NIBS) to treat neurological disorders in children, due to gaps in scientific knowledge. In this talk I address the ethical implications of applying this technology to children. I argue that compensatory trade-offs associated with NIBS present a challenge to its use in children, insofar as these trade-offs have the effect of limiting the child’s future options. The distinction between treatment and enhancement tracks morally relevant considerations here. As the intervention moves away from being a treatment toward being an enhancement—and thus toward a more uncertain weighing of the benefits, risks, and costs—considerations of the child’s best interests (as judged by the parents) diminish, and the need to protect the child’s (future) autonomy looms larger.

I compare NIBS for enhancement with ‘traditional’ intensive attempts to improve a child’s cognition, arguing that, whilst such intensive cognitive training will not be without trade-offs of a sort, these are less problematic from the point of view of the child’s open future, at least objectively.

I conclude by suggesting that NIBS for enhancement involving trade-offs should be delayed, if possible, until the child reaches a state of maturity and can make an informed, personal decision. NIBS for treatment, by contrast, may be permissible insofar as it can be shown to be at least as safe and effective as currently approved treatments, which are themselves justified on a best interests standard.

2016年8月24日（水）14:00-16:00

東京大学駒場キャンパス 18号館 4階 コラボレーションルーム 3

使用言語：英語 | 入場無料 | 事前登録不要

University
of Tokyo
UCT
Center
for
Practical
Philosophy

主催：東京大学大学院総合文化研究科・教養学部附属 共生のための国際哲学研究センター
(UTCP) 上廣共生哲学寄付研究部門