



Overusing laboratory tests: why is it unethical?

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In the July issue of *Journal of Laboratory and Precision Medicine*, Dr. Montagnana and Lippi (1) discussed whether or not the drawbacks of overusing laboratory tests outweigh the advantages. According to our perspective, from a bioethical standpoint, the answer should be yes, obviously, and we provide the following explanations.

It is universally acknowledged, at least in the Western world, that four core principles should govern ethics in medicine, i.e., respect for the patients' autonomy, beneficence, no maleficence, and justice (also called equity) (2).

Dr. Montagnana and Lippi have actually provided a good reason, at least implicitly, about the first three principles, but we would like to briefly examine the issue from the perspective of the fourth principle, i.e., justice.

It is indeed against justice to waste resources that could be more useful when allocated elsewhere. Lab tests often have substantial costs. Millions of people on earth not only will never have access to lab testing, but also are denied access to basic needs such as access to potable water. Moreover, overusing lab tests can be synonymous of destroying the environment, thus contributing to global warming on earth, and to mass extinction of animal and vegetal species (3). There is indeed a great need for humanity in general, and labs in particular, to change their paradigms.

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