

## Viewpoint: Human challenge trials – volunteers intentionally infected with COVID-19 – are ‘uninformative, unnecessary and unethical’

Deliberately infecting volunteers with SARS-CoV-2 to test the efficacy of vaccine candidates is unnecessary, uninformative, and unethical.

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[O]ne prominent British researcher recently [opined](#) that there is only a 50% chance that enough people in the United Kingdom will be infected with the virus for the University of Oxford vaccine field trial (as currently designed) to yield a statistically significant result... On an average day, [close to 100,000 newly confirmed cases](#) are reported worldwide, and I cannot recall another disease for which such a number was insufficient for a field trial of a drug or vaccine. Surely, with more time and patience, a real test is possible.

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Challenge studies are also uninformative. To the best of my knowledge, all current protocols for vaccine trials envisage enrolling only young, healthy adults. This is understandable from a recruitment perspective, but COVID-19 morbidity and mortality are highest among the elderly, who have a plethora of underlying chronic diseases.

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If such trials are unnecessary, uninformative, and dangerous, then they are by definition unethical. I fear that in the rush to find a “medical miracle” to end the pandemic’s toll in human lives and livelihoods, we will jeopardize the centuries-old moral imperative to do no harm, possibly destroying trust in the integrity of science and medicine for generations to come.

[Read the original post](#)