

Medical doctors have to sign up to a 'Hippocratic Oath.' Should scientists do something similar?

Almost 2,500 years ago, the Hippocratic Oath was written, named after Hippocrates the physician, to require new physicians to swear to healing Gods before starting an occupation as physicians. To this day the Hippocratic Oath is still taken, however it is modified to fit into the modern world, and newly graduated medic students have to take the oath. The oath is used as a general guideline in ethics in the medical domain. However other scientists, for example the physicists, do not have such an oath so does not emphasize the importance of ethics in the scientific domain. This essay discuss whenever other scientific domains require an oath to put stress on ethics dealing with human life.

In modern science all doctors have taken the Hippocratic Oath, this is to stress the point that being a doctor has lots of responsibilities to one's life, but also to protect the patients by increasing their confidence in seeing a doctor as a result of knowing all doctors had taken the Hippocratic Oath. The passage from the original version of the Hippocratic Oath, "*I will use my power to help the sick to the best of my ability and judgement; I will abstain from harming or wronging any man by it,*" orders doctors to do their best in their job and not use their skill or knowledge to harm or kill their patients. An occupation of doctor involves working on people resulting that patients' lives are in the hands of doctors, therefore the oath is taken to advice doctors that their job is a huge responsibility and not doing their job properly will result in harm or death to their patients. As a result patients are ensured they will not be harmed when seeing a doctor, therefore patients' confidence in seeing a doctor increases.

An argument against the Hippocratic Oath could be that even though doctors take the oath, they can just simply ignore it and cause harm to one's heart's content, therefore an oath is useless. One example of a case of a doctor harming their patients is the Harold Shipman case. During Shipman's career, up to 1998, Shipman had killed more than 150 of his patients by prescribing an overdose of Diamorphine, a very strong painkiller which is extremely lethal with high dose. Shipman also forged fake prescriptions which allowed him to obtained pethidine, a morphine-like drug, for his own pleasure. He was also caught forging one of his patient's will. The ignorance of the Hippocratic Oath was performed in this case and it certainly did not made Shipman not to harm his patients, therefore it suggests that the Hippocratic Oath was not the right solution to protect patients. After Shipman's case, the General Medical Council does not allow doctors to work in isolation and checks are done to pick up failing doctors to

prevent this kind of case happening again, this also suggest that the Hippocratic Oath was a very insignificant solution to protect patients.

In general other scientists in different fields other than the medical domain, for example chemists and physicists, do not work on people so the responsibility of one's life is not there, therefore an oath for scientist is not needed. For example a typical graduated physicist would work in research, the IT industry, engineering companies and finance. These kinds of jobs does not require any strict ethical rules or any life and death responsibilities, so an oath is not required for graduated physicists. Also these kinds of jobs does not rise any opportunity to harm or kill people so an oath to protect people is also not required and is useless.

However scientists working for the military could make devastating weapons of mass destruction and can be the cause of many military and civilian deaths in warfare. For example in 1945 the Manhattan Project in America developed nuclear weapons for warfare purposes during World War 2. Following from the project an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki which resulted around 200,000 deaths which ended World War 2. Although physicists developed the weapons with their knowledge, it was the government who pumped money into research for uranium and nuclear weapons which lead to use these nuclear weapons in warfare, therefore the responsibility of the deaths in Hiroshima and Nagasaki belongs to politics and warfare. As a result, an oath for scientists to take would be completely useless because they were working for the military and under their guidelines; in World War 2 it was to create weapons to kill and destroy.

In conclusion, scientists should not do something similar to the Hippocratic Oath because scientists does not have the same weight of responsibility compared to doctors where they literally can have a life and death situation in their career, perhaps even kill using medical skills and knowledge. It is argued that scientists can develop weapons of mass destruction however this is usually because they work for the government or military therefore responsibilities of lost of lives due to these weapons belongs to politics and warfare.

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