The risks of borrowed trust: a cautionary case study from a qualitative study exploring the use of DBS for addiction

Erika Versalovic¹, Marion Boulcault², Eran Klein¹,³, Sara Goering¹
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PROJECT AIM: Gauge the interest in and understand the concerns of people with substance use disorders (SUDs) on the possibility of Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) as a possible future treatment option.

Recruited participants through collaborating with in-patient treatment centers.

“Third party” ethicists conducted interviews with participants.

Analyzed results to better understand perspectives of prospective DBS end-users.
 Participant: "I think really because I would rely upon you and [clinician they work closely with] or your team. That's what we go with. I mean, I wouldn't second guess that." (Participant 2)

Participant: "No, I'm very intrigued. You're doing something right. It sounds good. You look like a good human being... So, yes. I really feel like, yeah, I trust in you guys and it feels well, they got a good person to pitch it." (Participant 24)
So, what?

- **Unanticipated intermediary “trust transfers”** should be considered for the ways they may distort qualitative results.

- These dynamics may play a stronger role when prompting for perspectives on hypothetical and novel technologies as they may be more reliant on situational factors to evaluate the intervention.

- **Possible ways to mitigate?**
  
  - **Emphasize the critical distance** between interviewers/ethicists and the device itself in the recruitment & informed consent process
  
  - **Add interview probes** to help make these dynamics more explicit

  - **Code for interviewer-interviewee dynamics** to contextualize how they may affect interview content
Thoughts, questions, continued conversation?

Please reach out: versa@uw.edu