When parents hold false beliefs: Understanding the implications of therapeutic misconceptions in non-therapeutic experimental medical research involving children

Abstract
Paediatric non-therapeutic experimental medical research (‘EPR’) is designed to measure safety and toxicity of novel agents in children. EPR is not another form of ‘treatment’. EPR studies are unproven experiments. Because of the grave level of uncertainty, and the significant potential for toxic harm, participation is generally restricted to children with life-limiting conditions. However, many parents agree for their child to take part in EPR with false beliefs their child may benefit; a phenomenon known as a ‘therapeutic misconception’. In this thesis I consider the ethical and legal duties of parents as decision-makers for children within the context of paediatric non-therapeutic experimental medical research (‘EPR’).