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Philosophical foundations for trust in doctors and medicine

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Term rich in meanings

- *My doctors does take care of me*
- *My patient tells me the truth*
- *This suture will hold*
- *I'm confident in this lab work*



The term

Trust (Oxford) = *"Firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something."*

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/trust>



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Trust's target

- a person
- an object
- a system
- an institution
- one's intention (to trust)
- one's ability to do something (to rely on)
- one's interest to put the effort in something

McLeod C. Trust [Internet]. Zalta EN, editor. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2015 Edition). 2015 [cited 2017 Mar 25]. Available from:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/trust/>



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A short graph

THE
STAKE

I trust YOU to do THIS.

TRUSTOR
(the one
investing trust)

THE PROCESS

- giving up control
- becoming vulnerable
- using heuristics
- considering the trustee as competent and benevolent
- being optimistic about the trustee

TRUSTEE
(the one trust
is invested in)

Rotaru T-S, Drug V, Oprea. How Doctor-Patient Mutual Trust Is Built in the Context of Irritable Bowel Syndrome: A Qualitative Study. Rev Cercet si Interv Soc. 2016;55:185–203



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Meanings

- one is benevolent (does not intend to harm)
- one cares, puts the effort in
- is competent (knows how)
- we can rely on the context at one's disposal:
 - medical system
 - devices
 - materials

different meanings: one might have no ill-intention but still being disinterested

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The argument of trust

- Trust is indispensable for society because:
 - we cannot control all our social context
 - we have a lot of interests
 - many of our interests depend on others
 - in order to pursue our interests, we must trust others

Faulkner P, Simpson T, editors. The Philosophy of Trust. Oxford: Oxford University Press;



Trust in medicine

- Trust in medicine is indispensable because:
 - for doctors to do their job, they need their patients honest and compliant
 - for patients to be compliant, they need to trust in receiving the best possible care

Rhodes R. The Priority of Professional Ethics Over Personal Morality. BMJ [Internet]. 2006;332:294. Available from: <http://www.bmj.com/rapid-response/2011/10/31/the-priority-professional-ethics-over-personal-morality>



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Malpractice and trust

- Malpractice casts doubts over the good intention, the competence and the context
- Malpractice affects trust people have in the *profession*
- All doctors need people's trust in *profession* in order to do their job
- The profession is the one giving powers and privileges and it needs protection.

Rhodes R. The Priority of Professional Ethics Over Personal Morality. BMJ [Internet]. 2006;332:294. Available from: <http://www.bmj.com/rapid-response/2011/10/31/the-priority-professional-ethics-over-personal-morality>



Thank you!



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