“Clinical Research in Context: Reexamining the distinction between research and practice”

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Abstract: At least since the seminal work of the National Commission in the 1970s, a fundamental distinction between research and practice has underwritten both conceptual work in research ethics and regulations governing research involving human subjects. In recent scholarship, there is a growing tendency to reify the distinction, an interpretative shift that has had a significant impact on contemporary research ethics. In this essay I aim to clarify the character of clinical inquiry by identifying crucial contextual constraints on justification constitutive of clinical science. This analysis shows that clinical research and clinical practice are not sharply distinct but intimately intertwined.