Centre for the Study of Incentives in Health

Governments increasingly use financial and “payment in kind” incentives to encourage people to act in individually and socially beneficial ways, particularly in the context of health policy. Yet even when effective in changing behaviour, their use has attracted strong criticism for being coercive, and undermining of autonomy, personal responsibility and equity. We propose an integrated programme of research that examines these criticisms from the perspectives of three disciplines – philosophy, psychology and economics – with the aim of evaluating whether financial incentives are an acceptable means by which to improve population health.

The central question we propose to address is:

*When is it right to use financial incentives to improve health?*

The key goals of the proposed Centre are:

I  To conduct a programme of research, starting from four case examples of current uses of financial incentives in the UK, that combines philosophy, psychology and economics in the analysis of the relationship between financial incentives, coercion, equity, autonomy and behaviour in order to evaluate the acceptability and effectiveness of financial incentives to improve population health

II  To train post-doctoral fellows and PhD students, with the aim of creating a cadre of interdisciplinary specialists to undertake innovative, substantive research and advise policy makers

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