You are a faculty member at a research university, who is currently serving as a member of the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), which must approve all research with human subjects before that research can proceed. A research group from the university's medical school has presented the following proposal to the IRB committee. The group wants to determine whether reducing the dosage of an FDA approved antischizophrenic drug from two doses a day to one dose a day will lessen the drug's severe side effects without diminishing its therapeutic value. The group proposes a study consisting of three groups. The first will take the drug twice a day, the second, once a day, and the third will receive a placebo, an inactive substance used as a control to determine whether the dosage reduction is effective. The study will be carried put in a double blind form – that is, neither the subjects nor the researchers will know initially which subjects receive two doses, one dose, or no dose. The subject of this study will be individuals who have been diagnosed as schizophrenic for many years, but whose conditions, although serious, do not include behaviors that put their own or other's physical safety or well being at risk. Most scientists agree that this form of research study is the quickest and most definitive way to determine the effectiveness of a treatment regimen.

Should you vote to approve the research study? If so, why? If not, why not?

Questions for the IIT Ethics Bowl (October 19, 1996)