

Animal Testing Is Not Essential for Medical Research

C. Ray Greek and Jean Swingle Greek are cofounders of Americans for Medical Advancement, a nonprofit organization, which educates the public about the hazards of applying the results of animal testing to humans. They are also authors of the book Specious Science: How Genetics and Evolution Reveal Why Medical Research on Animals Harms Humans.

Modern medical advances such as antibiotics and vaccines are not the result of animal experiments. For example, experiments with mice and rats failed to turn up any connections between cancer and smoking. Epidemiological studies, not animal experiments, found links between heart disease and cholesterol. Furthermore, more than half of the medications released between 1976 and 1985 were taken off the market or relabeled because dangerous side effects were discovered that had not been found in animal experiments. AIDS research with primates has also shown a high level of failure. Instead of relying on animal experiments for their research findings, scientists should use other, more dependable, techniques such as in vitro testing, modeling studies, and clinical research. Animal experiments continue only because they are profitable.

Medical advances are responsible for Americans living longer and better lives. But where have these modern-day miracles come from? Those who profit from animal experimentation, like at Colorado University [CU], would have us believe they came about as a result of research conducted on animals. Franki Trull, a representative for the animal research industry, has even stated that, "every major medical advance of this century has depended on animal research." But what are the facts? Animal experiments were not responsible for vaccines, MRI [magnetic resonance imaging] and CAT [computer-aided tomography] scanners, anesthesiology, antibiotics, medications that combat AIDS, chemotherapy, or modern surgical techniques. The lack of scientific support for extrapolating the results of animal experiments to humans speaks for itself.

Experiments on animals did not link heart disease to cholesterol, or high blood pressure to strokes. Epidemiology did. The medications used to treat heart disease and high blood pressure were developed despite misleading results of animal experiments.

Experiments on animals did not find any link between cancer and smoking. Cancer research has an abysmal record of failures when using rats, mice, and other animals. Of 20 compounds known not to cause cancer in humans, 19 did cause cancer in animals. On the other hand, of 19 compounds known to cause oral cancer in humans only 7 caused cancer in mice and rats.

Animal experimentation did no better in the field of surgery. Radial keratotomy is a surgery performed to enable better vision without glasses. The first radial keratotomies were animal experimentation-induced catastrophies. Surgeons thought they had perfected the procedure on rabbits, but it blinded the first humans.

Medication testing is another off-cited example of animal necessity in medical science. But consider this: Of the 198 new medications released between 1976 and 1985, 102 were either withdrawn or relabeled secondary to severe side effects not predicted from experiments on rats, mice and other animals. These side effects included complications like lethal dysrhythmias, heart attacks, kidney failure, seizures, respiratory arrest, liver failure, stroke and many more.

But let's discuss some animal experiments taking place at CU. Researchers are using monkeys to supposedly conduct research on AIDS. They have spent 20 years and nearly seven million taxpayer dollars to take baby

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monkeys away from their mothers. That's right, they think that by depriving infant monkeys of their mothers they will somehow find a cure for AIDS. How ludicrous. True, the immune system is adversely effected by stress. We have known that for years based on clinical observation of humans. But to think that by studying maternal deprivation in monkeys one can find the cure for AIDS is like thinking that by studying the wheel you can propel man to the moon.

Experiments on primates have a long history of misleading scientists about AIDS. Primate experiments misled researchers about how rapidly HIV [human immunodeficiency virus, which causes AIDS] replicates resulting in mistreatment and lost lives. The current medications used to treat AIDS were discovered in a test tube and bypassed animal testing altogether.

People often ask, "what should we do if not experiments on animals?" We hope the answer is obvious. We need more funding to do more of the research that got us here in the first place. We now enjoy the highest standard of medical care secondary to epidemiological studies, in vitro research, clinical research and observation, autopsies, research conducted on human tissue, mathematical modeling studies, and technological advances. These are the only techniques that have worked in the past and it is what we should be funding now!

People who have a vested interest in animal experimentation will simply dismiss the facts in this [viewpoint] as being ridiculous. They will present their version of the truth in such a way as to make it appear that animals have been invaluable to the scientific process. If anyone were willing to present their opinion in an open forum, we would gladly agree to debate them. The truth frequently comes out when views must be explained openly in public.

Animal experimentation does not continue because of the great medical strides that are falsely attributed to it. The practice continues for one reason. People make money from doing it. Animal experimentation is a multi-billion dollar industry. Every time a researcher receives money for experiments on animals, the university where he is employed takes a percent off the top. This money can then be used by the university in virtually any way it wants.

Unless someone from CU accepts our challenge to a public debate, the issue must be decided based on the following: Whom would you rather believe? The medical historians, former animal experimenters, human researchers, scientists, physicians and veterinarians who have stated that animal research is futile or the people and big businesses making billions of dollars every year from experimenting on animals?