This response was submitted using the online facility:

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QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

1. Background: the use of animals in research

ANSWER:

I believe that there are hundreds of alternative methods to animal research including computer modelling, epidemiology, in vitro research and many other advanced technologies. I don"t believe that results from animal research can ever be transferred to humans as we are a different species, albeit similar in many ways. The very fact that the same treatment can have a variety of effects on different humans race is an indication of just how complicated our genetic make-up is. A large percentage of drugs developed and then tested on animals never make to human clinical trials due to their effect/non-effect on an animal. Among those drugs abandoned may well be a cure/significant breakthrough for human disease. Because the animal research does not provide the required results, humans miss out. For example, many safe and useful drugs have been shown to cause birth defects in lab animals - eg. codeine, aspirin, ampicillin, some antibiotics, etc. I do not believe there is ever a justification for using animals in research for all the reasons stated above and, of course, the incredible suffering animals endure in hundreds of thousands of different biotech testing every year. Animals are sentient beings - they have nerves, recognise fear, experience distress and pain. Some scientists argue that they are not rational, therefore it is acceptable to use them. Would we then be happy to test drugs and chemicals on humans who are wholly dependent on others due to incapacity? I think not. Animal models are poor at best and cannot be relied upon to help the human race. Humans are getting more and more ill, not better. Cures haven"t been found for AIDS, Parkinson"s, some Cancers... using animals is delaying successful non-animal research.

2. Genetically modified animals

ANSWER:

Quite simply (as I have run out of time before the deadline), animals should not be genetically modified. We can and have genetically altered human tissue - there is a human tissue bank in the UK where people can donate tissue and fluids for non-animal research. There is no need to use animals, they are not a reliable model to apply to human conditions. The vast majority of the public don"t want GM food. The public are misled as to the reasons behind GM animals as they are misled with other animal-based research. Creating an animal to suffer on a long-term basis is appalling. Animals have a central nervous system and can feel pain and hurt and fear similar to humans. Because they have no human method of communication and are unable to refuse to cooperate, humans think it"s acceptable to produce suffering for "medical advancement". I do not believe that anything can justify putting a sentient creature through such agony. The GM animals created to study neurodegenerative diseases have not naturally developed these diseases as we would, therefore how can we extrapolate scientific data from these animals?

3. Alternatives

ANSWER:

There is a great need for more research into alternatives to using animals. There are many such scientific laboratories already conducting/commissioning such research - The Humane Research Trust, Dr Hadwen Trust, The Lord Dowding Fund for Humane Research and many others. Many medical charities no longer test on animals, recognising the importance and the future of non-animal research. The government and the companies who commission research in laboratories should fund these alternatives. Alternative methods could be used more effectively in every area of research, from medicine to genetics to chemical testing, etc. I believe there is an unacceptable level of duplication of animal research due to companies keeping their data to themselves. Whilst I do not condone research using animals in any way, there have been thousands of animals going through the same procedures in laboratories across the globe, which has been simple a waste of time, money, resources and animal life. Scientific journals do not appear to report on the level of failure animal research causes. I am limited in my knowledge of these publications. The real successes are those which are long-standing. Not drug testing that was a success with a certain species of monkey, successful in human clinical trials with limited volunteers, but has had to be withdrawn due to unacceptable levels of adverse drug reactions once on the market.

4. Ethical issues

ANSWER:

We are all animals, we are human, others non-human. The concepts of pain, fear, distress, happiness are of course felt in animals. Anyone who has a pet dog could corroborate this. I believe that animals do experience physical and psychological pain - a mother animal in the wild with dead offspring shows obvious signs of distress and unhappiness. Tame dogs can experience anxiety when separated from owners or others in their perceived pack. The suffering of an animal during research need not be assessed - of course they suffer. Various experiments I have read about detail how the animal (monkey/dog/cat/rabbit/mouse) is fully conscious whilst undergoing research. I do not believe we can know for definite if an animal is self-aware or self-conscious, but we should not assume it is not, simply because we are not sure. I do not believe research should be undertaken to investigate how animals experience the world, particularly not invasive research.

5. The regulations

ANSWER:

From undercover footage obtained by several anti-vivisection lobby groups, welfare of animals does not seem to be in any way a priority of some laboratories. I know little about animal research regulations, other than the welfare regulations being breached on more than one occasion. Breaching regulations should carry with it a significant penalty, yet if this happens, it is not widely reported. Regulation of animal experimentation should be increased worldwide. If researchers are driven abroad, what does this say about how important they believe purposeful regulations are? Finally, ALL animal research results should be published - even those that have been "unsuccessful". The public have a right as the tax-payers who fund this research to know what their hard-

earned cash is being spent on.

6: Providing information to the public

ANSWER:

I believe that all information surrounding the use of research involving animals should be disclosed to the public via an independent third party. EFMA are one of many scientific bodies who recognise, on purely scientific grounds, that there is no need for animal research given the hundreds of alternative methods available. The public"s money does not appear to be routed into these "alternative" research methods however, it continues to be granted via the government to animal research laboratory projects. We do not seem any closer to a cure for AIDS or for a lot of cancers, yet the alternatives, which need funding to enable extensive research, are still second behind the vivisection grants. I would not trust those who commission animal research to provide balanced information, nor would I trust the government. An independent body made up of an equal number of representatives from pro- and anti-vivisection scientists, unrelated to the projects in question would be more likely to provide a realistic picture. However, I would rather non-animal research be extensively funded to enable these scientists to make the breakthroughs I believe they can. Medicines, as with other animal-tested items (household and cosmetics, etc.) should be labelled as such so that the public can make an informed choice on the drugs they take. Many of the public avoid animal-tested goods. Labelling should include what testing was carried out and what conclusions were drawn from that testing to warrant it "safe" for human use.