

The response reproduced below was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on the ethics of research involving animals during October-December 2003. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

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Response to Question 1 – Animals in Research

I do not believe that animals should be used in research especially nowadays. Accurate results cannot be extrapolated from animal “Models” to humans – especially when the diseases are inflicted on animals that would not naturally occur in that species. I believe this to be a pseudoscience, which can be and very often is, inaccurate, misleading and positively dangerous to human health. We should now be investing in and using more modern and accurate alternatives and not just “stick with the old ways” because it has historically always been done this way, or because it hastens academic papers through or because it exempts the pharmaceutical companies from liability when sometimes their drugs harm or even kill humans. I think, as we have been doing this since the 1800’s – we should have enough information and move forward to more modern technological and scientific non-animal methods.

Response to Question 2 – Genetically modified animals

Yes, I believe that if the GM route is followed there will be even less policing of animal welfare than there is now, and there is very little control now. There have already been harmful mutations and certainly there will be more serious one to follow, probably ending in a catastrophic viral epidemic. GM animals would certainly be committed to a short life of permanent suffering which, at the end of the day, would gain nothing for humans, indeed probably millions more animal lives would be wasted as they are now in other areas of animal testing. It has taken some 30 years to find a cure for man-induced cancer in mice, which has born no relevance for a cure in humans. Transgenic animals suffer visible and invisible limb and organ abnormalities, organ damage and deformities, high infant mortality rates and a greatly shortened life span. There would be far-reaching and disastrous irreversible impacts on our environment should GM animals breed with wild animals and there would certainly then be no turning back. Animals are already treated with little or no respect and are viewed in our existing industries as commodities

With regard to xenotransplantation, it would only take one transplant to start an epidemic and there would then be no containment. Indeed this would be rather like playing Russian roulette.

Response to Questions 3 - Alternatives

The fact is, there are many other more reliable ways of research, and Government and Pharmaceutical industries should be investing in these now. It is time to move on and use newer methods such as invitro research, tissue

and organ culture techniques, Epidemiology, study of Bacteria Viruses, and fungi, Human Autopsy, Genetic Research, Clinical Research, Advanced Technology, Mathematical and Computer modelling. MRI, CT and PET Scanners.

As the 'Handbook of laboratory animal Science' states: -

"It is impossible to give reliable general rules for the validity of extrapolation from one species to another. This can often only be verified after the first trials in the target species (humans) extrapolation from animal models – will always remain a matter of hindsight"

I do not even agree in the 3 R's. Just one, Replacement and using what information we already have. Of animal experiments being done for hundreds of years have not problem solved and sorted it all by now, they NEVER will.

Response to Question 4 – Ethical Issues

All living beings are valuable and to destroy life is wrong. No one gave this right to the human animal; it was self-appointed. All sentient beings deserve to be happy and free from suffering – we expect this for ourselves. The human animal indeed has a duty of care and responsibility for stewardship of other animals where their paths may cross. Of course and sentient being, by the very definition of those words, can feel fear, stress and pain and so of course can and do suffer greatly.

We cannot justify making any living being suffer. It is against everything that is right. Read the Byrns Report on Hunting – not that we need science to prove the existence of suffering.

It is not acceptable to use animals in research as most accurate results can only arise from research on the target species. If it was decided that research was an acceptable on animals; this would be of great benefit to mankind as research on animals can be dangerous and misleading for human health. This should not slow down progress in new and better areas of medical research BUT acceptance of change and adequate funding would be paramount. This must and should be accepted by society in the interest of human health in future generations.

Response to Question 5 – The Regulations

How 'protected' are animals if they are experimented on and caused fear, distress, harm and even death?

I do not believe the standard for animal housing and care are high enough; nor are the inspections regular or vigorous enough; and all this is done covertly and behind closed doors with too much secrecy. These animals have no protection in reality, as no one is there to Police it. It is all very well having Regulations laid down by the Government but you can have as many Regulations as you like- the harsh reality is, there is not enough protection for these so called 'protected' animals. I would like to see every member of the House of Lords spend time in a Vivisectors laboratory.

How can 13,700 personal licences only, cope with research under proper regulations observing correct codes of conduct by properly qualified people, experiment on over 2 million animals – 1999 ?? How can anyone police 'the limit of severity' and how can the people doing these acts not become desensitized? How can 33 inspectors oversee all this? Therefore, these lives that cannot speak for themselves, are totally disrespected and are just commodities to do with, what they will on a gargantuan scale. Technicians are not highly trained.

6.Provding Information to the public

Commercial companies do not publish the results of the majority or their experiments. Nor do applications for project licenses, submitted to the Home Office, have any opportunities to be viewed.

People want and need to know more about the absolute truth of animal research. The industry has for far too long, traded as the ignorance of the general public who seem to have kept in ignorance of the facts. There should be open policy on all animal research because if it is as necessary and well controlled as this industry say it is, and then researchers would have nothing to fear.

Nothing to hide, with documented evidence of all major medical breakthroughs that can be directly attributed to animal research for the benefit of human health and an open and honest culture – equals nothing to fear. Animal suffering should be assessed by independent animal welfare professionals.

I think we have all seen the extreme suffering of animals exposed as a result of under cover investigations – to name but a few Cambridge University, Huntingdon 'life' Science, Harlan Hillcrest all of which were brushed aside by the Home Office!