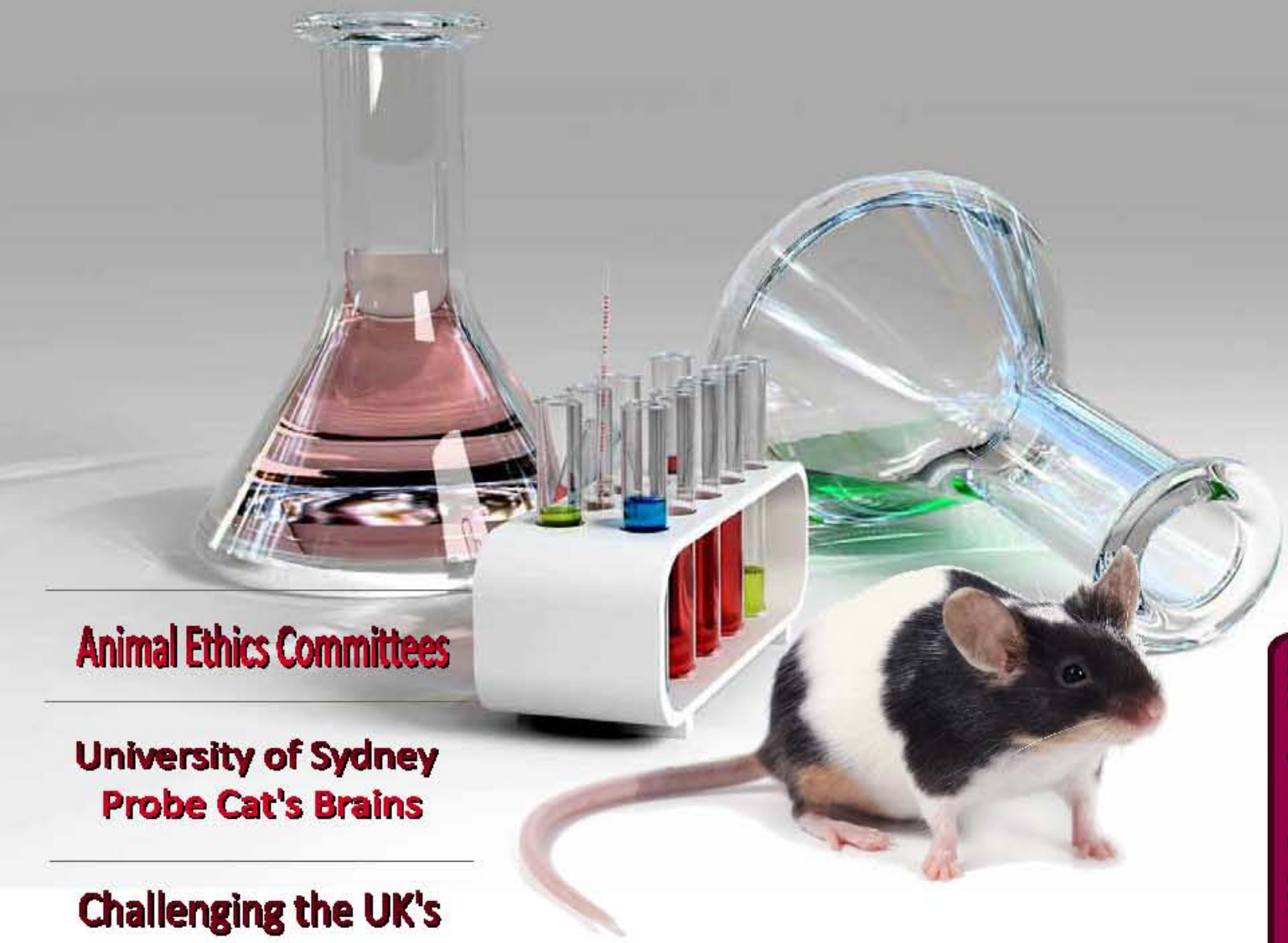
HRA

Humane Research Australia



Animal Ethics Committees

University of Sydney Probe Cat's Brains

Challenging the UK's Animal Research Community

Issue 120 : December 2009

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HRA
Humane Research Australia

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from the CEO

Welcome,

The current system of regulating animal experiments has long been a concern of mine. There is a code of practice, there is animal welfare legislation, there is oversight by an Animal Ethics Committee and there is a supposed adherence to the 3R's Principle. However it fails dismally in its mission to 'protect' animals from harm, and secondly, it gives a false perception to the community that the use of animals is ethically justified. Such a concern has made it a dilemma for me.

Many argue that we need to be a part of the 'system' in order to know what is going on and to play a part in protecting those animals caught up in that same system – and I certainly appreciate that stance. But at the same time, I could never personally be a part of a system I consider to be so very wrong in so many ways. Perhaps being a part of an organisation like HRA, which strives to end the practice of animal experimentation, gives me the comfort I depend upon to live with my own conscience.

I often engage in discussion with members and supporters who serve on ethics committees to get some understanding of the difficulties and challenges they face. I thought it would be good to have this newsletter featuring articles on the topic and provide you with some views and perspectives from those who have had a closer insight into the system.

HRA will always work towards eliminating animal experiments and replacing them with viable scientific alternatives, but we unfortunately appreciate this is still on the distant horizon. In the meantime we will continue to participate in dialogue to challenge the (escalating) use of animals in research and teaching.

Helen

Helen Marston

News

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING / NAME CHANGE

Yes it's true – we are changing our name!

Our members have asked, and we have obliged.

At our recent AGM we formally changed our name to Humane Research Australia or HRA. It's not too far removed from our original name but is clearly a lot less cumbersome, (have you ever tried to say AAHR a few times?) and Humane Research is easier to remember and even abbreviate.

In our world of lobbying every little bit counts!

Rest assured, we are not changing our goals or our mission and we will continue to work towards the elimination of the use of animals in research experimentation and their replacement with more viable and accurate scientific alternatives.

Our new website address is **www.humaneresearch.org.au**

Please contact the office if you would like a copy of the annual report.

Committee members for the year ahead are:
President, Paul Crossley
Vice President, Steph Geddes
Treasurer, Miles O'Connor
Secretary, Brian Gardiner
Committee members, Sarah Gardiner, Cheryl Veitch, Eliza Poulton

HRA
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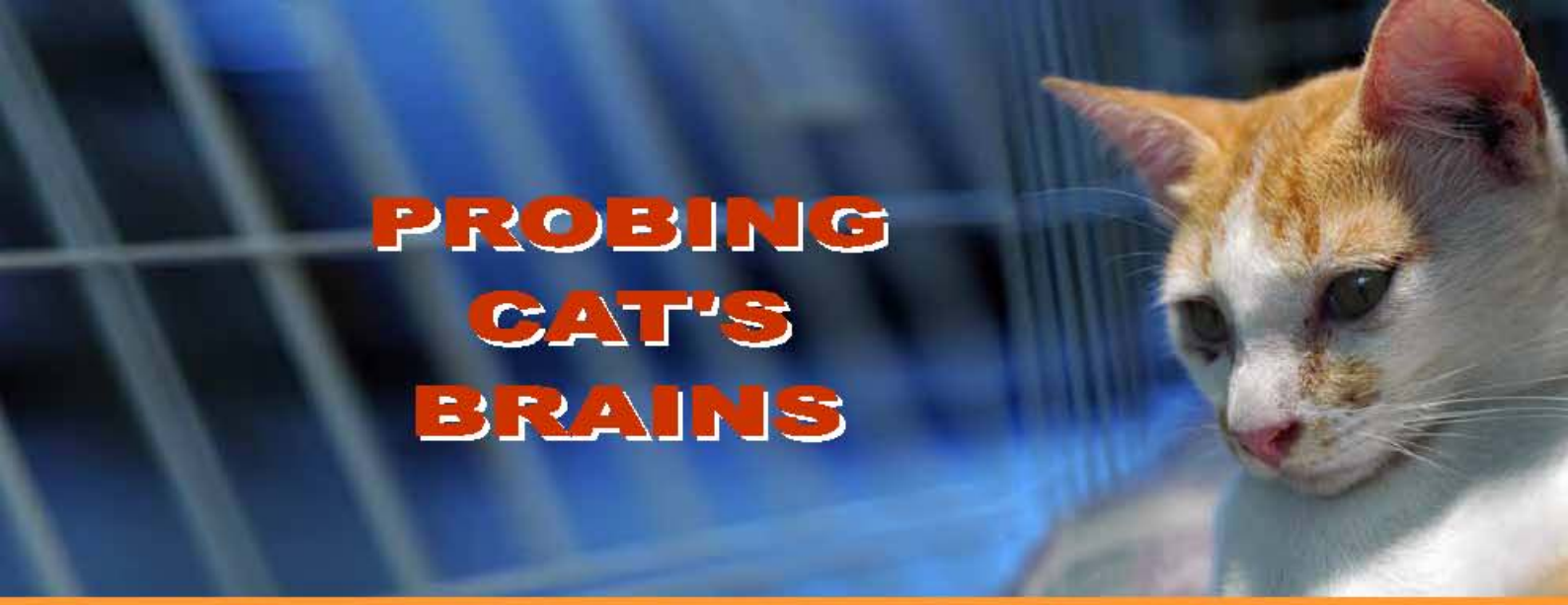


PROBING CAT'S BRAINS

An informative review that blows open the doors of a prominent Australian University

The University of Sydney, in conjunction with University of Groningen, Netherlands, has been injecting the brains of cats to measure responses to fear and anxiety.

Eight cats were used in one experiment. They were each anaesthetized in a box, a catheter was inserted into the trachea while the cat's head was secured in a frame and its body suspended from the frame by straps.

Two burr holes were drilled in the skull to allow access to the midbrain and to enable suctioning of the brain tissue. The entire mid region of the brain that includes the thalamus and hypothalamus was removed, and then anesthesia was discontinued. (Anesthesia is considered no longer necessary as the part of the brain that is believed to control pain and consciousness has been removed).

The cats started breathing spontaneously and were then microinjected with an amino acid to stimulate areas of the midbrain, as previous studies "have shown that different portions of the midbrain have different effects in the context of survival behaviour."

There were 25 minute intervals between injections in order to eliminate the effect of the previous injection. Up to 40 injections were made in each animal.

At the same time, electronic recordings were conducted using electrodes surgically implanted in diaphragm muscles to measure breathing during each brain stimulation. A 19 gauge needle was inserted into the trachea to record changes in tracheal pressure and the mouth kept open to record vocalizations - mews and hisses - on a microphone.

The cats were later anesthetized, and their brains removed and dissected, with injection sites identified using fluorescent microscopy.

Results:
Different regions of the midbrain have different effects on breathing behaviour necessary for survival in specific circumstances (that are unlikely to be replicated in humans) Larger injections elicited much longer vocal sounds. (Who would've guessed?)

Irrelevance:
Researchers noted the difference in humans is that the influence from higher brain levels on the brainstem is missing. They also refer to previous studies using rats and suggest that "the basic behavioral repertoire in the PAG is further evolved in cat than in rat." This statement raises the question as to how relevant the research would be to humans, assuming that our midbrain would be even further evolved. It is therefore very likely that this experiment on cats actually served little if any relevance at all.
Results support previous observations in cats (1937, 1988, 1993, 1994, 1997), monkeys (1979, 1985, 1986) and humans (1988, 1994)
The use of animals in this research has been labeled 'senseless' by neurosurgeon Dr Marius Maxwell and veterinarian Dr Andre Menache.

Reference: The Midbrain Periaqueductal Gray Control of Respiration, Hari H. Subramanian, Ron J. Balnave, and Gert Holstege, The Journal of Neuroscience, November 19, 2008 . 28(47):12274-12283.

This research was funded by a NHMRC Neuroscience postgraduate scholarship. Please write to the following urging them not to support animal-based research:

Prof. Warwick Anderson
Chief Executive Officer
NHMRC
GPO Box 9848
Canberra ACT 2601
Or email: ahec.nhmrc@nhmrc.gov.au

And write to the following expressing your disappointment at such wasteful and futile research:

Dr Michael Spence
Vice Chancellor
University of Sydney, NSW 2006
Or email: Vice-Chancellor@vcc.usyd.edu.au

What you can do...

MICRODOSING

when less is better

Jacqueline Cuthbertson, *(BAppSc(health)RN RM Grad Dip Comm.Dip.Journalism) reports on a safer, species-specific methodology for determining drug safety.*

Microdosing – take a minute amount of a drug, and give it to a healthy human. Then watch how that human processes the drug. You can then apply what you learnt to larger doses of the same drug in the same species. Sounds pretty straight forward doesn't it? Like one of those really simple ideas, that everyone loves and wonders why no one thought of before. Well it's not really that easy, and one of the reasons is that to watch tiny amounts of drugs travelling around the body, we need some intense technological equipment. For this reason the expertise which has been used in carbon dating has been modified and applied to the Microdosing process.

Microdosing is a method using human volunteers at the earliest stage of drug development. Very small doses of a drug accompanied by radioisotope-14 are given to a healthy volunteer, and with extremely sensitive monitoring devices, the body's response to the drug can be observed safely. There are several ways that the dose can be monitored and these are Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS), Nuclear Magnetic Resonance and Positron Emission Tomography, with AMS being the most popular.

The amount of drug used is less than 1 percent of the minimum pharmacologically active dose needed. In this way scientists can gain insight into the pharmacokinetics (PK) of a medication. This is the study of how the drug behaves in the body. It includes absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion, onset of action, and duration of effect. These processes are known as ADME and they are usually conducted on animals during pre Phase I of drug testing. The drug then moves on to Phase I, II and III .The first stage of drug development can take up to 18 months to complete and cost $3-5 million (1), so any streamlining of this process will be welcomed by drug companies as a money–saver. The attraction of microdosing to animal advocates is that animals aren't used in the process, or their use is minimised. Also, drugs which are not going to make the grade are eliminated earlier, and it allows finer tuning of the type of animal needed for the rest of the process.

Testing of drugs for approval involves the suffering of thousands of lab animals and pressure has been mounting to reduce, replace and refine the number used. This has been because the public has become more aware of the cruelty involved and because of the inherent flaws of animal usage. The results of animal tests for drugs are often misleading. Many drugs have moved through the early stage of development without a hiccup only to show later in the process or even after marketing that they are not suitable. Data from the International Life Sciences Institute showed that rodents for example, predicted only 43 percent of adverse effects from drugs (2). Conversely, the drug is often shown to be unsafe in a rat or a dog, for example, and it has to be withdrawn from development when it may have been successful in humans.

Emily McIvor of the Dr Hadwen Trust recently addressed a House of Lords EU Committee which is revising the use of animals in experiments. She said "the animal model is inherently flawed as a surrogate for humans and it would be wrong to assume that flawed animal models are the best science we can ever achieve or to limit our ambition of what science can bring us tomorrow"(3).

The United States' FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has also asked why we are still using tools from the 20th century to formulate drugs in the 21st and that a new development method is needed. Currently Europe uses around 12 million animals per year for testing, and 115 million are used worldwide (4).

So with the time ripe for new processes the development of Microdosing has come to fruition. The process has been around for several years and a paper was written in 2003 as a result of a workshop on the subject by volunteers in research and teaching, including FRAME (Fund for Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments) and pharmaceutical companies, but apparently the concept was slow to take off. ii One of the reasons is the size and complexity of the imaging equipment and another is that there have been rumblings

from the pharmacological arena that it's not reliable. Not as reliable as giving the drug to a foreign species such as a rat and then applying that data to humans? However, in 2005 a paper based on the CREAM study (Consortium for Resourcing and Evaluating AMS Microdosing) was published. Several drugs which are already in use had been evaluated. The medications were given to healthy volunteers as a microdose and the results were compared with the PK characteristics already known. There was a seventy percent correlation between the results from Microdosing and those of full doses.

This study has established the worth of the process, and after a slow start Microdosing is now being used extensively by leading drug companies. The European Union Microdose AMS Partnership Programme (EUMAPP) was set up in 2006 to allow Europe to develop this tool more thoroughly, and the process has been supported by the FDA and the European Medicines Agency; a very promising prospect in light of the current revision of European legislation regulating animal experiments.

Advantages of Microdosing:

- Reduction of the number of animals used.
- Refinement of which animal is to be used for further studies. Although not perfect from an animal advocate's point of view, it eliminates the trial and error approach and reduces the number of animals used.
- With results from Microdosing in pre Phase I, it may be possible to use only one animal species in the Phase I studies instead of the mandatory two.
- It indicates early in the process which drugs are unlikely to be successful and therefore means animals are not being tested for drugs which will not go the distance.
- Microdosing can cut the time spent in early testing from 18 months down to 4 to 6 months and the cost tenfold (5).

References:

1. Human Microdosing proves its value in drug R & D, 2005. Drug Researcher.com, http://www.drugresearcher.com/Tools-and-techniques

2. Early Microdose drug studies in human volunteers can minimise animal testing: Proceedings of a workshop organised by volunteers in research and testing, 2003. R.D. Combes, T. Berridge, J. Connelly, M.D. Eve, R/C. Gomer, et al. European Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Elsevier.

3. House of Lords Committee today told: EU needs new strategic vision to replace animals in scientific research, 2009. Dr Hadwen Trust, http://www.drhadwentrust.org/

4. End EU Animal Tests – Directive 86/609, 2006. http://www.makeanimaltestinghistory.org/

5. European Union Microdose AMS Partnership Programme (EUMAPP) – background paper – Jan 2006. EUMAPP, Prof Colin Gomer, EUMAPP Steering Committee, UK.

TELEVISION COMMERCIAL

We are working with a production company to produce a television ad which we hope will raise our profile and create more interest and discussion about the validity of animal experimentation. This ad is financed directly by a generous bequest from the Estate of Anne Lennon MacMahon and the donations we have received over the past few months through the generosity of our members and supporters. We thank you again and hope you find the ads effective. HRA also wishes to thank SWAAB Attorneys and Cameron Stewart for their assistance in providing legal advice for this project .

FACEBOOK

Are you a member of Facebook? If so, please become a fan of ours. Help us spread the word about animal experiments and keep updated on what's happening.

LUNG-ON-A-CHIP

Rats used for the testing of chemicals and cosmetics may soon be replaced by artificially grown human tissue. Cell biologist Kelly BéruBé, has managed to produce tiny inside-out lungs by growing human lung cells on a surface of plastic scaffolding. Although her method is already being used for testing by various drug companies, she aims to develop a chip on which thousands of "microlungs" can be grown then tested simultaneously. With about 30,000 chemicals needing to be tested over the next decade, this advancement could not only save countless animal lives, but also benefit the development of effective drugs by testing directly on human tissue.

Source: New Scientist Magazine issue 2712

RITCHIES FUNDRAISING

You can now help raise funds to stop animal experiments simply by shopping! When shopping at any Ritchies supermarket or liquor store and by using a Community Benefit card nominating HRA, 1% of your shopping bill is donated to HRA.

You can either contact us here at the office and we will send you out a card or keytag, or you can pick one up when you are next in a Ritchies store simply by nominating HRA receiving the card or keytag on the spot.

Then just make sure you show your card or tag every time you shop and not only will 1% be donated to HRA but there are over 2,000 red ticketed items around the store giving you discounts by supporting the Community Benefit Program, so you can save money on your shopping bill too. These cards and tags can be used anywhere throughout Victoria, NSW and Queensland and the money is still donated to us. So shop at Ritchies where HRA will benefit and help us end animal experiments.

MINDING ANIMALS CONFERENCE, NEWCASTLE
Helen Marston

In July this year, I was fortunate enough to attend the Minding Animals Conference in Newcastle, co-convened by HRA member Rod Bennison.

The conference was a wonderful opportunity to network with many of our members as well as many other animal welfare advocates from around the world, including Peter Singer, Bernie Rollin, Jill Robinson, Marc Bekoff, Andrew Knight and Dan Lyons. Aside from the knowledge and inspiration received from these seasoned campaigners I was also given the opportunity to present on animal experimentation – demonstrating how today's vivisectors have not moved far from the attitudes of Rene Descartes and Claude Bernard (17th and 19th centuries respectively). A full copy of the presentation can be viewed on our website under "Papers/Articles" or by calling our office.

RUN MELBOURNE

Huge thanks to Steph Geddes, John McCaskill, Phillip Glazier and Douglas Leith who joined Helen in Run Melbourne 2009. It turned out to be a lovely sunny day and a wonderful way to raise much needed funds for our work – even if there were a few sore muscles in the following days (mostly Helen's!). Our team raised a total of $1,950 in sponsorships and are all keen to do bigger and better next year.

50th Anniversary of the 3R's

Helen Marston looks at how the 3R's have served the research industry over the last 5 decades.

Fifty years ago in 1959 William Russell and Rex Burch proposed the three R's – replacement, reduction and refinement -in their manuscript *the principles of humane experimental technique*. The recommendations, which have been universally accepted, were intended to reduce the overall amount of suffering caused to animals during research.

We are all aware that the 3R's serve as complementary rules of thumb to reduce overall suffering and form the framework of the animal 'ethics' systems. When we consider the continued rise in animal usage statistics however, it is clear that this framework simply isn't working.

At conferences I have attended there has been quite some focus on refinement but very little on reduction and specifically on replacement. Similarly, the use of animals in education is a clear example of an area in which we CAN replace animals and yet they are still being used.

Even according to co-author William Russell, *"Refinement is never enough, and we should always seek further reduction and, if possible, replacement... Replacement is always a satisfactory answer." (1)*

It's absolutely essential that we ask the question, "Can the aims of the research be achieved in ways that do not involve animals?" And "Will the scientific outcome of this research justify the lives it will take and the suffering it will cause?" In many cases you will find that it will not.

The House of Lords Select Committee 2002 said*: "We are not, however, persuaded that enough effort is always made to avoid the use of animals. We are similarly not persuaded that where this is possible, sufficient effort is always made to minimize the number of animals used, and to minimize the pain and suffering inflicted on each animal."(2)*

The major problem with the 3R's principal, along with inadequate legislation, soft codes of practice and questionable ethics committees, is that they serve to endorse the belief that animal experimentation is necessary, rather than challenge its validity.

A radical overhaul is long overdue – a centralization of the decision-making processes in order to avoid repetition of experiments creates consistency, and guarantee that decisions are made based on expert knowledge of the alternatives available. All this plus an overarching assessment as to whether the ethics of the experiment are even justified in the first place.

The 3R's principal has served us well to identify the areas in which the suffering caused to animals in research may be reduced. But all laws, guidelines and principals need to be constantly reviewed, and after fifty years such a review is long overdue!

1. Quoted in *ATLA 34, 271-272, 2006*
2. House of Lords Select Committee 2002 *Animals in Scientific Procedures (Norwich:TSO)*, quoted in *The ethics of research involving animals, Nuffield Council on Bioethics, 2005, p.206*

Animal Ethics Committees

A personal account

Dr. Denise Russell, Honorary Research Fellow, Arts, University of Wollongong

Dr. Denise Russell was asked to become an independent member of the Animal Ethics Committee at the University of Sydney in 1994, and in the belief that she could find out more about animal experimentation and possibly help some animals, she joined. Denise discovered that there was no possibility of debating ethical issues beyond questions concerning the number of animals used and whether they could be anaesthetised or not. From her words the term 'Ethics Committee' appears at best to be an oxymoron – a justification of the translation from the unpalatable to the acceptable. She describes her experience.

There was never any discussion about whether the value of the possible experimental outcome justified the harm done to animals in the experiments. I tried to get such a discussion going concerning experiments with dogs where they were given random electric shocks, appeared to just give up on life, and refuse to eat. This was put forward as a model of anorexia nervosa in humans. One of the committee members said to me: 'if you object to this what will you do with my research proposal which is coming up at the next meeting on the same line of research. Would you object to that too?' (said with a laugh). I said 'yes'. The chairperson then told me there were no grounds for objection as this was a reputable area of research because other people had published papers about it. I wondered then whether the job of the Ethics Committee was just to rubber-stamp the status quo. In fact in the years since the committee has been meeting no research proposal had ever been rejected, though some had been sent back for modification.

The researchers were required to note whether the proposed experiment was useful for humans or not. Some experimenters ticked a box when asked if the experiment was useful to humans when it quite clearly was not, e.g. one research project concerned a beak disease in parrots. When I objected that the responses are often put down in a cynical or jocular vein I was told 'there is a need to maintain a sense of perspective in all matters'.

I was deeply shocked by my experience on this committee and thought that if ever I have time to go into this area further I will. Over the years since that time I have discussed the Animal Ethics Committees with other independent members (often philosophers) and members from animal protection organizations. The situation has not changed. Research proposals are not rejected outright, the scientists may be asked to trim the edges, and there is no discussion of non-animal alternatives.

Photo: Dr Denise Russell

Members are required to sign a confidentiality agreement so the general public is kept in the dark about how many experiments are conducted, what animals are used, how they are sourced, the pain and distress inflicted on research animals, the number of animal deaths and so on. There is little or no monitoring of research. The overseeing committees are called 'Ethics Committees' and so it sounds like any issues that may be ethically problematic would be dealt with but from my experience, and the experience of colleagues on Ethics Committees at other Australian universities, this is most definitely not the case.

Animal Ethics Committees and the Community's (lack of) Involvement in Decisions about Animal Research. A personal account by Dr. Siobhan O'Sullivan

Dr Siobhan O'Sullivan is a Research Fellow at the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne. To learn more about her work, visit her webpage at: http://www.ssps.unimelb.edu.au/about/staff/profiles/osullivan.

From 2002 until 2005 she sat on the NSW Government's Animal Research Review Panel (ARRP). ARRP has operated in NSW for a little over 20 years. It exists by virtue of an Act of the NSW Parliament. The Act states that ARRP is to be made up of a range of stakeholders including researchers, veterinarians, employees of pharmaceutical companies, and representatives from animal protection agencies, as well as academics and government employees. Siobhan was nominated to ARRP by the NSW Animals Societies Federation, and began sitting on the panel while working for the World League for Protection of Animals (WLPA).

When the NSW Government's representative from the Department of Primary Industries visits research facilities every couple years to inspect the facility to see if it is complying with its research license, members of ARRP are notified of the visit and may choose to participate in the inspection.

As I was keen to learn as much as I could about animal research I attended numerous inspections. Research institutions were always notified well in advance that an inspection was to take place. Prior to an inspection I received written information about the institution I was to visit. On the day of the inspection the inspection team would be shown around the facilities, usually by a senior member of staff. If animals were onsite the inspection team would often see them, although it was not common to see animals actually undergoing an experiment. Most often they were in cages in the animal house, or in outdoor facilities in the case of wildlife research. As a member of the inspection team I also had the opportunity to speak to the researcher(s), hear what they were doing and why, and ask questions. Finally, the inspection team would normally sit in on the Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) meeting, observe how the Committee conducts its meetings, and then have a look back through their records. Following the inspection I would be invited to list what I thought were problems/issues at the institution. That list was taken back to ARRP for discussion at the next meeting. If other members of ARRP shared the in-

spection team's concerns the institution would be notified and asked to take remedial action. That action could include making changes to the way the AEC meetings are conducted, or the way animals are housed in cages, or the amount of exercise time the animals receive etc. A list of issues for remedial action would be sent to the institution – although at the time I was a member, ARRP did not have a good system in place to ensure suggestions/proposals were acted on.

Members of ARRP do not have the same function as members of AECs. AEC members are asked to make decisions about whether a research project can be carried out, and if it can, under what circumstance. Members of ARRP are not called upon to make decisions about whether a process can go ahead (except in the case of toxicology testing). Rather, their role is to ensure the AEC is doing its job lawfully and effectively.

During my time as a member of ARRP I saw some things that made me feel less concerned about animal research than I might have otherwise been. To this day I find myself in the position of saying to animal advocates 'no it's not that bad and this is why...' But, I also saw things that I found very traumatic, things that confirmed my worst fears about animal research. I would like to be able to share with readers what I saw so everyone can have the opportunity to draw their own conclusions about animal research in NSW. However, by law, I am not permitted to divulge the details of what I saw, nor are members of AECs. The stringent confidentiality requirements placed on ARRP and AEC members have caused me to reflect on the suitability of those laws, and what their impact might be. In the remainder of this article I would like to make a couple of (personal) observations about animal research and confidentiality. I hope they will give readers something to think about, and also stimulate debate:

***Eth·ics* (eth'iks)**
***n.* Motivation based on ideas of right and wrong. 2. The philosophical study of moral values and rules.**
–Webster's Dictionary

1. Confidentiality clauses mean the animal research community can make no legitimate claim to community engagement. *In 1989, a Senate Select Committee into animal research recommended that the animal research community take steps to ensure the (entire) community is engaged and informed about the animal research process. It concluded that 'it has been the secretive approach in the past and the reluctance to provide public information about their use of animals in experiments which has lead to the public misapprehension about the nature of animal experimentation in this country'.*

In Australia it is likely that most, if not all, animal research is overseen by a properly constituted AEC, including a Category D (community) member. It is the inclusion of the Category D person who is thought to constitute the community engagement aspect of the system. However, I would argue that the AEC system results in little to no community engagement in animal experimentation. Let's do the sums. In a country with a population of 20 million, there is likely to be around 100 AECs. As all Category D members are prohibited from sharing what they know about animal research with others, we can assume that community knowledge about animal research is limited to those 100 Category D AEC members. That translates to one in every 200,000 citizens of this country granted the opportunity to engage with, and form their own view about, animal research. If only one in every 200,000 citizens were permitted to vote in Australian elections, would we consider that a democracy? I think not. The inclusion of Category D members on AECs carries with it the promise of some level of community engagement. But the confidentiality clause stunts that possibility and does little more than make a mockery of the suggestion that the community has the right to participate in the animal research decision making process.

2. What is there to be afraid of? *Either animal research can stand up to community scrutiny or it cannot. The AEC system is designed in such a way that AEC members must carry out a cost benefit analysis – is the animal suffering worth the results that might be generated; its pain versus gain. The community knows that (some) animal research harms animals, why seek to obscure that? Instead of trying to hide animal research behind impenetrable laboratory doors why doesn't the research community make a case to justify what they are doing? Either a practice can withstand public scrutiny or it cannot. Animal researchers seem to be in a highly privileged position whereby they do not have to account for their actions to the community at large. Do we trust any group in society such that their actions need only be accountable to a small number of hand-picked overseers?*

3. Are other countries doing better? *Other countries in the OECD have recognised the un-democratic nature of the animal research confidentiality requirements, and have moved to enhance the community's capacity to engage in the debate over animal research. For example, in the UK a summary of all approved protocols is available to the community on the Home Office's website.*

Community engagement is challenging, but it is rewarding. If you think democracy has something going for it, then you will agree that confidentiality stifles community engagement, and where the community is not engaged, the system can not be scrutinised and reformed as required. Animal research without community engagement is a risky proposition, not least of all for the animals who deserve to have the community involved in deciding whether what animals go through as part of the research process is fair or not.

1. Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare (1989) *Animal Experimentation: Report by the Senate Select Committee on Animal Welfare*, Canberra, Australian Government Printing Service, p.6.

Challenging the UK's Animal Research Community

Whilst at the Minding Animals conference in Newcastle, Helen Marston spoke to Dr Dan Lyons, Director of British anti-vivisection group Uncaged, and one of the UK's leading experts in animal research policy.

Can you provide a very brief background of Uncaged - when formed, basic structure etc.?

Uncaged was formed by Angela Roberts and Lynn Williamson in October 1993. We have been based in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, since then. We are a not-for-profit organisation with two full-time staff (Angela and myself) as well as a network of volunteers who unite with us for days of action and help to promote our campaigns in their community and online.

What are your major campaigns?

Our overall mission is to abolish animal experimentation, so we devote a significant proportion of our resources to campaigning in relation to major windows of opportunity to achieve positive change. For example, the European Union is currently drawing up a new law that will affect animal experimentation across the whole continent, so the future of millions of animals is at stake. Uncaged has been involved in lobbying the UK Government, the European Parliament and other institutions who have input into this process, like the House of Lords.

In terms of specific campaign projects, probably our major one has been the global boycott of Procter & Gamble, to persuade what is the world's largest consumer goods company to stop animal testing. We've also put a lot of effort into campaigning against the looming prospect of animal-to-human organ transplants – xenotransplants - although since the initial hype in the mid-1990s, the prospects of that happening have receded, although cell xenotransplants are still on the agenda and horrific experimental organ xenografts are still being inflicted on animals.

Another major project is Protecting Animals in Democracy, which aims to push animal protection issues up the political agenda – the first stage in achieving the broad political changes that will help millions of animals who suffer in laboratories and factory farms. Achieving constitutionally-protected rights for animals is essential to give animals the protection they deserve, so we also organise International Animal Rights Day every year on 10 December to put the case for animal rights to the public in a positive and persuasive way.

What do you think is the general attitude of the British public in regards to animal experimentation?

Most research into public attitudes shows that the British people are instinctively opposed to the cruelty of animal experimentation. However, if they believe that an experiment will help to alleviate a painful, life-threatening condition, they will tolerate it. The interesting thing here is that, even on the admission of the animal research lobby, the vast majority of experiments that currently take place in the UK would not satisfy these criteria. If research practices started to reflect public opinion, radical, unprecedented change would result. That's why animal researchers and their friends in government ensure that the practice is isolated from public scrutiny.

What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced?

The intransigence of the political establishment is undoubtedly the biggest problem we face in the UK. The Government only listens to animal research interests and goes out of its way to defend and propagandise in favour of animal experimentation. Achieving a political level-playing field would make a huge difference. One factor in this would be transparency, but once again the Government has deliberately prevented reliable information about animal experimentation from emerging.

Have you had any successes?

Probably our biggest success is related to this point of freedom of information. Back in 2000 we were leaked astonishing documents from inside a biotech company called Imutran – a subsidiary of Novartis Pharma – that described their pig-to-primate organ transplant experiments. On 21 September, we published the documents together with a report entitled "Diaries of Despair" in recognition of the horrific records of the dying primates. We felt we were justified in our disclosure because of the wrongdoing revealed in the documents. On the same day, the Daily Express national newspaper, read by over a million people, published an exclusive, award-winning story.

Within a few days however, Imutran had gone to the High Court in London to obtain a temporary injunction banning all disclosure of their confidential documents. It was to be the start of an arduous and intimidating 30 month legal battle. However, Novartis also announced that Imutran would be closed down, so we had already achieved a significant victory.

Photo: Dr Dan Lyons, Director Uncaged

Eventually, the body responsible for allocating legal aid finally accepted that we had a good chance of success and that there were important public interest issues at stake. We finally received legal aid and professional representation. This gave us something of a level playing field. Then, in October 2002, during the legal battle, we received another leak of documents related to Imutran's research, this time from the Home Office - the government department which is supposed to regulate animal experiments. The revelations in the Home Office documents strengthened our case.

In the face of this, Imutran/Novartis were forced to back down. On 1st April 2003, the High Court finally ratified a new injunction which allowed the publication of over a thousand pages of documentation, with names and commercially confidential details kept hidden. These documents, especially the clinical signs of the dying primates, blows away the veil of secrecy surrounding vivisection to give a truly unprecedented insight into what really happens to animals used in experiments. They can be found on our website at www.xenodiaries.org .

What is the current situation of xenotransplantation in the UK?

One of the effects of the Diaries of Despair revelations was that it gave regulatory bodies information that even they wouldn't normally get to see. As a result, the expert body advising the Government on xenotransplantation basically concluded that the technology was dead in the water. So there has been a much more critical attitude to xenotransplantation in the UK since 2000. Having said that, one rather infamous scientist here was given permission to research xenotransplantation via pig-to-pig transplantation experiments. But, interestingly, as soon as we started to kick up a fuss about it the research was mysteriously halted. So, I think that xenotransplantation research has been significantly constrained and there doesn't appear to be any appetite for clinical trials of pig cell transplants, which we understand are taking place in South East Asia.

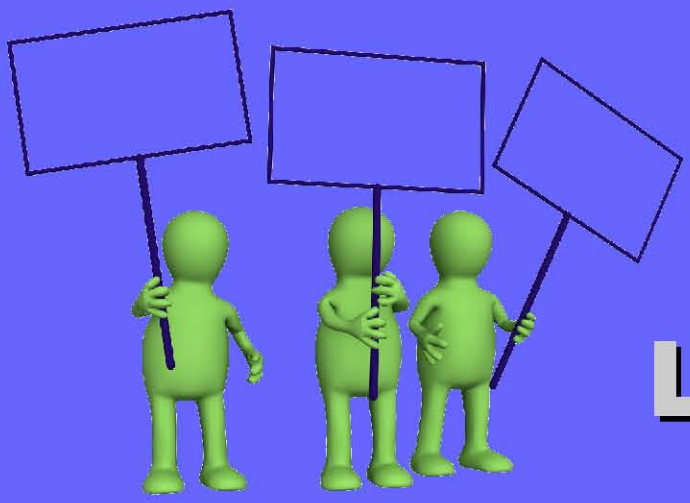
How do you personally view the future of animal experimentation? Will it ever end?

I would like to think that animal experimentation would end one day, but I'm really not sure that human society is ethical or rational enough to achieve that. Having said that, I am confident that we are making a difference, and that if we can continue to conduct effective, positive campaigns that win the public's heart and minds rather than alienate them as some of the more aggressive campaigns have done, then we can at least make progress. I also suspect that technological progress in developing non-animal alternatives, particularly in toxicology, has the potential to save millions of animals in that sector.

ALTERNATIVE TO RABBIT SKIN IRRITATION TEST APPROVED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Commission has announced the adoption into EU regulation of an alternative to the cruel rabbit skin irritation test also known as the Draize test. This means that it is no longer permissible to use rabbits to test the irritation of chemicals. The ruling will have immediate positive implications for animals who would otherwise have been used to test chemicals under the new REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemical substances) legislation. While the alternative was validated in 2007, the delay in its acceptance has been blamed on the bureaucratic process.

Source: BUAV press release 24 July 2009



Lobbyist Guide

Andrew Bartlett has been active in politics for over 20 years, including as a Queensland Senator from 1997-2008. Since leaving the Senate, he continues with his passion of advocating for animal rights issues.

Thanks to the generosity of Voiceless and their grants program, I've been working throughout this year to pull together an online guide full of ideas on how to lobby, advocate and campaign more effectively for animals. It will focus particularly on better ways to engage with political processes, as well as provide as many resources as possible about all the animal related legislation, codes of practice, groups, organisations and issues.

I've also been trying to tap into the ideas and experiences of many of the animal campaigners and advocates around the country. There are many lessons, successes and frustrations experienced by many of us over many years, and we all have a lot to learn from each other. It sometimes feels like little progress is being made, but hearing so many stories from others reinforced to me that there have been many victories – large and small – and importantly that there are many many people working in so many different ways on behalf of animals.

The reasons I am aiming to make this predominantly an online guide rather than a traditional printed book or manual are firstly so it can be available as widely as possible, and secondly so that it can be readily updated and expanded over time if people find it of value.

All things going well, the first version of the guide should be uploaded before the end of this year. Having relied on the ideas and efforts of many other people to provide a lot of the content and help pull it together, I'll be keen to get feedback on how useful it is and ways to improve it further. I look forward to hearing peoples' views and ideas then. In the meantime, well done on your efforts and interest in helping animals – you are making a difference and I encourage you all to keep doing what you can.

Photo: Andrew Bartlett

BEQUESTS

A lasting legacy for future generations of people AND animals.

Preparing your Will is an extremely personal matter. It allows you to provide for your family and friends, and any organization or cause that is close to your heart.

Leaving a bequest is one of the most significant ways to support Humane Research Australia as our work depends heavily on donations and bequests from our supporters to continue to oppose animal experiments, and to promote more humane and scientifically valid alternatives.

After providing for your loved ones, if you would like us to continue our valuable work please also consider a gift to Humane Research Australia Inc.

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per month, until further notice. I understand that this payment can be stopped by me at any time.

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