

Curiosity really is killing cats

Many Australians are surprised to learn that cats are being used in highly invasive procedures in Australian laboratories. In fact, recent statistics show that in just one year over 2180 cats were used in research and teaching across Victoria, New South Wales, and Western Australia.

Details provided in the Victorian statistics indicate that 68 cats were used in the 'major physiological challenge' category. Experiments in this category require the animal(s) to remain conscious for some or all of the procedure, and involve interference with the animal's physiological or psychological processes. The challenge causes a **moderate or large degree of pain/distress, which is not quickly or effectively alleviated.**



Recent statistics indicate that the types of experiments cats are subjected to include use in central nervous system testing, immunomodulatory methods, infection inducing, long term attachment / insertion, neuromuscular block / electroimmobilation, regulatory product testing, toxicity testing, and other disease testing.

All over Australia, cats are being used in what is called 'basic research' – this is research that is conducted in an attempt to understand basic phenomena, or out of 'scientific curiosity', without seeking specific applications of the research, e.g. without measurable human health outcomes, cures, or treatments.

Irrespective of the type of research being conducted, cats are not laboratory tools for researchers to use at their leisure. And yet we continue to see thousands of cats used in experiments in Australia every year.

What kind of experiments are being conducted on cats?

Repeated experiments by the Bionics Institute involving kittens being deafened one day after birth, used in cochlear implant experiments, then killed

Between 2007 and 2016, at least 10 experiments of this sort have been conducted by the Bionics Institute in conjunction with the University of Melbourne. The researchers involved in these experiments have collectively received over \$2.4 million for these experiments.



Drugs injected into cats eyes in an attempt to model human retinal degeneration

Invasive surgery on cats eyes to test retina implants with limited pain relief

"As a veterinary surgeon for 30 years I challenge the researchers responsible for [these studies] to provide one shred of evidence that these cat experiments are predictive of what happens in people with hearing problems. The fact that these researchers make the claims they do in their published work indicates that they need to undergo a basic course in evolutionary biology."

~ Dr Andre Menache.

Are experiments on cats reliable for medical research?



There are major anatomical, genetic, dietetic, environmental, toxic, and immune differences between animals - including cats - and humans, making them inappropriate for use in studying human disease. Many studies and systematic reviews show that there is discordance between animal and human studies, and that animal 'models' fail to mimic clinical disease adequately.

A recent study by Rattay et al. (2013) compared the anatomical auditory nerve differences between the cats and humans in order to determine if results from the cat ear are really transferable to humans. The study found a number of differences, as expected, and stated:

*"Shorter total lengths of SGNs in cats, thinner processes, smaller cell bodies and fundamental differences in myelination are **obvious reasons not to rely on a cat model when signalling in human auditory nerve is discussed, as these differences between the species may lead to important differences in auditory nerve function.**"*

Given this, one must seriously question why the Australian researchers engaged in these experiments spend valuable time and resources using cats, rather than investing in advanced human biology-based methods of research, in order for results to be directly relevant to human health outcomes.

It is now time to end the use of cats in Australian research laboratories and instead, focus on research that is human-relevant.

Help us stop experiments on cats - Take action now:

We need your help! Fill in the form below or visit www.humanerresearch.org.au today and donate or become a member and help us to continue the fight to end unethical and unreliable animal experiments. Together we can promote a better future – for both animals and for human medical progress.

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