

MEDIA RELEASE

18th November 2013

Day-old chicks used in memory experiments

Humane Research Australia has condemned a recent experiment using day-old chicks as yet another tragic example of the unethical, cruel and pointless research carried out at Australian universities.

The experiment⁽¹⁾, conducted by researchers at LaTrobe University and published in 2012, used 1,160 one-day-old chicks to study the effects of Memantine – a medication for Alzheimer’s Disease – on their memories.

Chicks will innately peck at beads as food. Researchers coat a certain different coloured bead in a bitter tasting substance, and after showing disgust when it pecks this bead, the chick will avoid pecking further beads of the same colour. This is called a one-trial passive-avoidance learning task.

In this experiment, the chicks were then injected with differing doses of Memantine to see what affect it would have on their ability at the one-trial passive-avoidance learning task mentioned above.

HRA Chief Executive Officer: *“In some studies, various doses of Memantine have been shown to have either no effect or to impair memory of rats and chicks. Other studies have shown it to improve memory functioning. Considering these differing results within the same species, how can researchers believe that data obtained from the brains of day old chicks can be extrapolated to the more advanced human brain?”*

“Human clinical trials have already shown Memantine to improve cognition in Alzheimers Disease (AD) as well as vascular dementia, and it has already been approved for the treatment of AD in Europe and the United States. Why, therefore, are we wasting taxpayer funding on animal experiments? It’s imperative that we focus on the species that is affected by a disease - ie human patients - using non-invasive imaging techniques, and not relying on data from another species.”

¹ Samartgis, J. R., Schachte, L., Hazi, Agnes., Crowe, S. F. (2012). Memantine facilitates memory consolidation and reconsolidation in the day-old chick. *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory* 97 (2012), 380–385.

For further information/comment:

Helen Marston, Chief Executive Officer. Ph. 03 8823 5704

<http://www.humanereseach.org.au/case-studies/day-old-chicks-used-to-study-the-effect-of-memantine-on-memory>