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NTP Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Tox. Methods

11/29/01

Dr. Bill Stokes, Director
NTP Interagency Center
(MD EC-17)
National Institute Of Environmental Health Sciences
P.O. Box 1233
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Ted Cravens
Downers Grove, Illinois

I am heartened by the news that the EPISKIN™, EpiDerm™, and the Rat Skin transcutaneous electrical resistance assay tests are in place. This will certainly reduce the needless suffering of many rabbits and other animals. I am concerned, however, by the prospect of verifying inconclusive results on live animals. I appeal to your sense of decency. We know beyond any doubt that such animals feel pain and suffer tremendously. I also appeal to your common sense. The use of animals in experiments has been going on, with vigor, for hundreds of years yet almost all important scientific and medical breakthroughs have come from human, not animal studies.

Everything important we have learned about diabetes has come from human studies, the link between pancreatic disease and diabetes was discovered in human autopsies. The most impressive studies of hardening of the arteries have occurred not in baboons or dogs, despite their use, but in human autopsy studies. Similarly, although decades of research has been conducted using animals as subjects, the connection between lung cancer and smoking was shown to be unequivocal because of human studies.

The scientific method cannot justify the use of animals for research. It's simply not good science. Judging side effects in animal tests is often impossible. Even our fellow primates cannot tell us if they have a crushing headache, ringing in the ears, double vision, or nausea. More important, different species react very differently to what goes into them. Parsley is poisonous to many birds, penicillin kills guinea pigs, and chloroform is so toxic to dogs that doctors searching for anesthetic in years past avoided using if for human patients. Perhaps even more important were the drugs we missed because animal tests did not point to them being useful. Amazingly, even aspirin was initially rejected because it causes deformities in infant rhesus monkeys.

Money spent on animal experiments should go into far superior research methods (e.g., vaccines can be fashioned from human diploid cells and synthetics). It should also go into prevention. How much better to fund dietary education programs that would spare people heart attacks, cancer, high blood pressure, and stroke instead of causing these miseries in animals. I appeal to you one last time Dr. Stokes, please stop the use of animals in experimentation.

Sincerely,

Ted Cravens

Ted Cravens
West Suburban Animal Advocates