

Marie Enger

Andrea Barnes

WR 121-024

12 November 2010

Animal Testing: Necessary or Cruel?

Brainstorming a topic to write about proved to be quite a challenge. Following the advice of my professor, I attempted to locate a subject of deep interest to me, a subject I could explore, discover, and learn from. As a Zoology major with a Pre-Veterinary option, I thought about what subjects would be handy to know in the future. After a short time scrolling through Google, I came across the topic of animal testing. One would assume that a young lady with such a passion for animals would have an opinion on such a subject. Surprisingly, I held no such opinion; in fact, upon further examination I realized that I held absolutely no knowledge about animal research whatsoever. I realized that my knowledge of animal testing was limited to the overly opinionated comments of animal research antagonists. These animal rights activists accuse scientists who experiment on animals of being merciless and immoral. I began to wonder why I had only heard about the negative consequences of animal testing. It must be doing something good for the human race if it continues despite constant opposition from animal rights groups and the public. As I join the discussion about animal testing I hope to discover whether or not it should be a means to further medical and scientific progress.

The first step to my self-education in the field of animal research was to find a source that could clearly lay out all sides of the matter. I hoped to seek out solid resources that explained the rationale behind each position's point of view, as well as some statistics on how many people agree with each side. After searching thoroughly, I finally found a reliable statistic; however, it

was not at all what I expected. A public opinion and polling website called Gallup showed that thirty-four percent of the public believed medical testing on animals to be morally wrong, while fifty-six percent of the public believed it to be morally acceptable ("Perceived Moral Acceptability"). I was shocked. Because of the severe opinions against animal research I have encountered, I assumed that the opposition to animal testing would be at least in the sixtieth or seventieth percentile. How could the percent of those who accept medical testing on animals be greater than that of those who are opposed?

What I discovered in relation to this question is that the root of the problem lies in a disagreement over morality. As Claire Andre and Manuel Velasquez point out in their article "Of Cures and Creatures Great and Small," the debate over painful and seemingly unjust experimentation on animals "enjoins us to consider the wrongfulness of inflicting pain and the duty to respect the lives of all creatures, while also considering our obligations to promote human welfare and prevent human suffering" (2). Where do we draw the line between humans and animals? On the one hand, the lives of all creatures have value and are worthy of respect; however, do we not owe more respect to the protection and well-being of people? One thing is for certain: "popular opinion and overwhelming majority of contemporary scientists agree that animals...can suffer" (Singer 170). Because almost everyone agrees that animals feel pain and suffer, the two major schools of thought are this: people agree with animal testing only if it is humane and necessary, or people completely disagree with animal testing in any way, shape, or form. Despite the percentage of animal testing opposition being lower than I expected, thirty-four percent is still a large portion of the population. This led me to ask what spurred such opposition to animal testing.

On the search for specific evidence concerning the cruelty and horror behind animal research, I discovered an extremely disturbing video clip called "Unnecessary Fuss." This video clip is only one small part in a series of disturbing videos that document researchers in a lab at the University of Pennsylvania studying head trauma by deliberately inflicting head injuries on unanaesthetized baboons. Having watched only a small portion of this video series, I now realize why the opposition toward animal testing is so severe. Though this lab depicts only one example of immoral animal research, it was enough to make me furious at the researchers involved in the study. This video exposes one of the most hated acts of animal research known as vivisection, or the act of cutting into a creature that is still alive (Miller 15). Acts that fall under the category of vivisection include: burning live animals to examine severely burned tissue, hard blows to the head, deep cuts, injecting fatal viruses such as HIV, and poisoning live animals. There should be no circumstance in which the deliberate inflicting of pain to any creature is allowed.

As my search continued, I came across a journal article that contains upsetting statistics concerning animal testing: "Every second of every day of every year an animal dies in an experiment in the United States" (Miller 15). Not only are these animals dying, but they die excruciatingly painful deaths after having lived their entire lives in isolation. During testing, products are sprayed on them, rubbed into their eyes, consumed, or inhaled by these poor creatures. Two extremely common tests include the Draize Test and the LD-50 test (lethal dose 50% test). In the Draize Test, the solution to be tested is applied to rabbits' eyes, leaving them raw and bleeding. After a period of about seven hours all the rabbits are killed and examined for internal injuries. The LD-50 test is used to measure the toxicity of a substance by determining how much substance it takes to kill half a group of 200 test animals. The test goes on for days; meanwhile, the animals suffer extreme pain and distress. Not only are millions of animals forced

to live in small cages, tortured, and killed every year, but often the results of the tests and studies are unreliable or inaccurate. Because the results are often incorrect, due to physiological differences, many of these animals suffer and die pointlessly. This argument leads to my next question: why does animal testing continue despite its undesirable nature, and what benefits extend from animal experimentation?

The only excuse to continue animal research would be that it somehow benefits the human population. The first thing I discovered while attempting to research animal testing benefits was that sources in favor of animal research are very scarce. Despite this obstacle, I came across an article in the *British Medical Journal* in which author Trevor Jackson discusses the difficulty of locating these sources due to the rampant presence of opposing organizations and hacktivism. Jackson states that “[s]ites of companies involved in animal research, and those of their financial backers, are the kind of places that ‘hacktivists,’ an internet species combining activism with hacking skills, are increasingly likely to target” (244). Fortunately, Jackson took it upon himself to refer his readers to a credible internet source explaining the good that animal testing has done thus far. Upon viewing this source, the first thing I found was an extremely long list of advances in medicine due to animal testing, for example, dogs were used to perfect the art of blood transfusions as well as provide understanding of the development and possible treatments of Muscular Dystrophy. Guinea pigs and primates were enormously helpful in the formation of asthma medications and inhalers. Mice, rats, and monkeys were crucial to the development of the polio vaccine, penicillin, immunotherapy treatments for breast cancer and Leukemia, and the creation of effective antivirals that slow the progression of HIV/AIDS (“Your Health”). This source contained pages of the advances brought on by animal testing. Thinking about these facts, I realize that millions of people would most likely die each year from the

various diseases listed above if animal testing ceased to exist. Unfortunately, despite its extreme importance to biomedical research and medical advances, animal experimentation still sports a bad reputation. The scientists involved in animal research do what they do for the betterment of humanity, so I wonder, how do scientists respond to the constant hostility toward their work?

Scientists understand that their ethical duty is to limit animal research as much as possible by developing alternatives. I located proof to this statement in a book called *Alternatives to Animal Testing*, edited by Christoff A. Reinhardt. This book is a compilation of studies and reports that catalog and discuss the different efforts all over the world to accomplish the three R's, and not the classic reduce, reuse, and recycle. These three R's promote alternatives to animal testing through replacement, refinement, and reduction. According to one of the reports in this book, "[s]cientists recognize that they must promote collaboration between industrial, academic, and regulatory scientists to achieve their goal of reducing animal use" (Flint 27). Scientists are just as determined to discontinue animal testing as activists are; there is plenty of evidence of scientists' attempts to replace, reduce, and refine animal research throughout the world. Examples of this include: the European Center for the Validation of Alternative methods (Marafante 21), the development of the LAL test which replaces testing endotoxins on rabbits (Flint 27), the development of labs to validate alternative methods of research (Spielmann 75), computer aided drug design (Vedani 99), and the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments, or FRAME. The goal of FRAME is to "work to relieve the suffering of animals used as subjects in biomedical research...and support research into acceptable new techniques as substitutes for the use of animals in all such research" (Balls 45). Scientists know that anything is better than using live animals for research and are putting thorough efforts forward to discover other ways of testing toxins and establishing cures.

Who would guess that both activists and scientists are fighting for the same cause? I located an article that was published in *The San Diego Union-Tribune* recalling the experience of a Mr. William Otterson who has been taking cancer fighting drugs, developed with the use of animals, for eleven years. Otterson recounts his experience speaking to five animal rights activists at a rally against animal research. He shared this with the newspaper: "I don't hate animals...But you have to test new drugs and procedures on animals. It's necessary. When science finds a better way, and we are working on it, we will stop using animals" ("Animal Research" B-7). Otterson has a very good point; there are so many people who rely on animal testing for their well-being. Does this mean animal testing is right? Not necessarily, but animal experimentation is not entirely wrong either. What people have to consider when approaching this issue with such distaste and malcontent is this, peoples' lives depend on this research. As of now, animal testing is necessary. Fortunately, scientists are working fervently to replace animal research, and with a little luck animals will be expelled from the lab, and the millions of human lives that depend on them will be just fine.

Works Cited

Andre, Claire and Manuel Velasquez. "Of Cures and Creatures Great and Small." *Santa Clara University*. The Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, n.d. Web. 2 November 2010.

"Animal Research: TRIBUNE, 1,2,3,4,5 Edition." *The San Diego Union - Tribune*: B.6. Print. 1988.

Balls, Michael, and Julia H. Fentem. "The Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME): 23 Years of Campaigning for the Three Rs." Reinhardt 45-55.

Flint, Oliver, "A Timetable for Replacing, Reducing, and Refining Animal Use with the Help of in Vitro Tests: The Limulus Amebocyte Lysate Test (LAL) as an Example." Reinhardt 27-43.

Jackson, Trevor. "Animal Research." *BMJ : British Medical Journal* 322.7280 (2001): 244. Print.

Marafante, Erminio, and Michael Balls. "The European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM)." Reinhardt 21-25.

Miller, Sarah Rose, A. "Animal Research." *The Humanist* 61.5 (2001): 15. Print.

"Perceived Moral Acceptability of Behaviors and Social Policies." *Gallup*.Gallup Inc. 26 May 2010. Web. 8 November 2010.

Reinhardt, Christoff A., ed. *Alternatives to Animal Testing*. New York: VHC Publishers Inc., 1994. Print.

Singer, Peter. "Animal Research: II. Philosophical Issues." *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*. Ed. Stephen G. Post. 3rd ed. Vol. 1. New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004. 170. Print.

Speilmann, Horst, Barbara Grune-Wolff, and Manfred Liebsch. "ZEBET: Three Years of the National German Center for Documentation and Evaluation of Alternatives to Animal Experiments at the Federal Health Office (BGA) in Berlin." Reinhardt 75-84.

Unnecessary Fuss. Dir. Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. 1984. *YouTube*. Web. 4 November 2010.

Vedani, Angelo. "Computer-Aided Drug Design and the Three Rs." Reinhardt 99-106.

"Your Health." *Understanding Animal Research*. Research Defense Society. n.d. Web. 8 Nov. 2010.