

**Submission
No 267**

**INQUIRY INTO USE OF PRIMATES AND OTHER ANIMALS
IN MEDICAL RESEARCH IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Ms Barbara Kelly

Date Received: 30 March 2022

SUBMISSION

Inquiry into the use of primates and other animals in medical research New South Wales

Written by

Barbara Mary Kelly

INTRODUCTION

Animal experimentation for medical research should be prohibited in NSW. It is legalised violence. The test subjects should not have to endure the pain, misery, distress, torment, isolation and agony that is forced upon them by humans. The medical researchers who carry out the experiments could only do so if they were lacking in sensitivity, normal emotions, empathy and compassion. Animals are sentient creatures with the same feelings, emotions and desire to be loved as humans. Carrying out animal research in laboratories desensitizes the scientists to suffering – both human and animal. Above all, it diminishes us as human beings. Any benefits are outweighed potential public health risks. I do not want my taxes being used to fund cruel, unnecessary and controversial animal experiments especially when there are more advanced alternatives now being used overseas.

Here are some of the alternatives:

List of humane, evidence-based, cutting-edge alternatives to animal testing

- Computer modelling techniques, computational models
- In-silico (computer-based) methods
- Robotic testing
- Simulators
- Non-invasive imaging technology – MRIs and CAT scans
- Human clinical and epidemiological studies
- Human cell and tissue cultures
- Microdosing – giving humans very low quantities of a drug to test the effects on the body at the cellular level, without affecting the whole-body system
- Mathematical and computer-based databases and models
- Stem cell and genetic testing methods
- 3-D cultures of human cells
- In vitro – test tube techniques
- Microchips that use human cells and tissues to construct functioning organs allowing researchers to test drugs and treatment
- Genomics and proteomics

The urgent need for more government investment in these alternatives and overseas developments regarding the regulation and use of animals in medical research

Cruelty perpetrated on animals, in the name of research, started thousands of years ago but nowadays there are scientifically better options that are more applicable and predictive for humans. According to Dr Monika Merkes, to whose work I will later refer, *new alternatives to animal research and testing can only be developed with the support and collaboration of governments, the scientific community and industry. Philanthropic organisations also provide financial support.* This government needs to commit to supporting more

humane and scientifically valid, non-animal methods of research to replace all animal testing.

In America, **PETA** (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) published a 60-page document (available free online) in October 2020 entitled **The Research Modernization Deal**. To quote from this publication, *The billions of dollars in research grants awarded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the world's largest funder of biomedical research, are failing to lead to effective treatments for many of the diseases that kill and incapacitate humans. The reason for this failure appears to be a **misplaced reliance on animal studies**. A great deal of scholarly research in the last 15 years shows that animal studies are flawed and divert both monetary and intellectual resources from methodologies better suited to curing human disease. Critically, intrinsic biological and genetic differences among species contribute significantly to inescapable problems in extrapolating results from nonhuman animals to humans, even in the best-controlled, best-executed study designs.*

In Australia, Dr Monika Merkes, Honorary Associate at La Trobe University and President of Humane Research Australia has published **Better ways to do research: An overview of methods and technologies that can replace animals in biomedical research and testing**. (Written in May, 2019, a free plain language copy of the 74 page document is available online.) Her sources are mainly scientific publications in peer-reviewed journals and government reports. Dr Merkes provides references so that readers may find out more from the original article. She has summarised her findings from scientific literature and used many quotations because the researchers are better at explaining their work.

These scholarly, up to date publications should be required reading for our state politicians. We are lagging behind the times and behind other countries where far greater progress to move away from animal research has been made.

In September, 2021, **The European Parliament** voted in favour of developing an action plan to end experiments on animals. The Members of Parliament supported a motion for a resolution to accelerate the transition to innovation without the use of animals in research, regulatory testing and education. The Members of Parliament have directed the European Commission to work with scientists for a future without any animal testing.

ESTABLISHING THE FACTS IN NSW

We are entitled to know the facts but there is a **lack of transparency and accountability** in the animal medical research industry here in NSW. This secrecy indicates that the government does not wish to reveal the shocking character and magnitude of the medical research industry for fear it would distress the community. I would like answers to the following questions during the Parliamentary Inquiry:

- Where does this medical research take place?
- Who are the medical researchers and scientists?
- Why are those who work in the industry lacking in sensitivity, normal emotions, empathy and compassion? How can they ignore the animals' suffering?
- How many animals are involved?
- What species are used in medical research. Are native animals included?
- What kind of experiments, and how many, are the animals forced to endure?
- How must the test subjects feel?
- Why are medical researchers permitted to use procedures that would be illegal outside the laboratory?
- How are the animals treated and housed?
- How many people work in this industry?
- How many people or businesses, here and overseas, are paid to breed animals for medical research? (Do they know that the animals will become test subjects?) Under what conditions are the animals bred? Who are the breeders? How much are they paid? What are the dangers in importing animals?
- Why does medical research involving animals take place behind closed doors and high fences?
- Three primate medical experimentation survivors made an escape attempt when they were being transported to Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney on 25th February, 2020. (According to Humane Research Australia (HRA), there were 272 primates used in medical research in the country in 2017, with 165 of those in NSW.) Why were they desperately attempting to flee to freedom? What painful procedures had been forced upon their bodies against their will? Where are they now?
- How many experiments are unnecessarily repeated?
- What medical discoveries, cures or new medication have been achieved through animal research in NSW?
- How much money in total has been spent to achieve this?

- Are the Premier and the Ministers concerned fully briefed about what takes place in animal testing for medical research before they sign off on the funding?
- How many animals are euthanised once the experimenters have completed their research?
- How many animals are rehomed once the experimenters have finished their research? If they are not rehomed, why not?

My feelings

I don't believe in violence against humans or animals. All lives matter. I feel depressed and helpless in the face of animal experimentation for medical research because I can't turn a blind eye to what is happening. I wish that I did not live in a place where animal experimentation for medical research is tolerated. I wonder how people can prey on unsuspecting animals and use them as test subjects. When I go to the supermarket, or pass people on the street, I wonder how many are involved in, or support this appalling business.

In an email received this week, I read of medical researchers overseas who used a drill to bore holes into the skulls of 30 inadequately anaesthetised young beagles so that the distemper virus could be injected into their brains. This makes me feel so sad for the dogs and I wonder how people could possibly perform such a procedure without feeling any compassion towards the animals. I feel furious that such treatment can be state-sanctioned. No doubt, animals are treated similarly here in NSW.

I feel the same way that many people in the past must have felt when they lived in societies that condoned slavery, transportation to the ends of the earth for petty crimes, the death penalty, racial extermination or genocide.

We can and must do better than this now.

CONCLUSION

It is now time we put an end to this miserable part of our history in NSW. Current technology now provides us with practical alternatives to the use of primates and other animals in medical research. We are living in an era when people are more respectful of animals and our natural environment than ever before. (Australian and international groups that support animals have a huge following.) It is recognised that every animal has an individual character and warm personality. We can learn from animals without dissecting them. Our experience with the pandemic of the last few years has taught us that those animals placed under stress can shed a virus with far reaching consequences for humans. The next pandemic could currently be in the making in a laboratory somewhere in NSW if we persist with outdated,

invasive and barbaric animal testing in the name of medical research. We are creating the perfect conditions for the next pandemic.

Hath not an animal eyes? Hath not an animal hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions...If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge?

With apologies to Shakespeare