

**Submission
No 296**

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

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I am writing to express my concern about the use of animals in medical research, and in particular, the lack of accountability by the research community. This issue has received acknowledgment by the passing of a Senate motion calling for increased transparency.

There are sound arguments – both ethical and scientific – against the use of other species as models for human disease. However it is difficult to have an open discussion about the costs and benefits of animal use when all information is shrouded in secrecy and the public is denied access to what occurs within Australian laboratories.

I understand the European Union has addressed such concerns and Article 43.3 Directive 2010/63/EU now requires that non-technical summaries (NTS) are published by the European Member States in order to provide the public with access to information concerning projects using live animals. The NTS must include title, purpose, objectives and benefits, number and type of animals, predicted harms and application of the 3Rs (Reduction, Refinement & Replacement). They must be written in non-scientific language and accessible for five years. Annual reports on animal use in research are published, unlike Australia, which has no mandatory reporting system, meaning that there is no way of measuring progress or otherwise.

Certain projects (including those which use non-human primates) must also undergo a retrospective analysis – a powerful tool to facilitate critical review the use of animals. It is believed that this facilitates improved design for similar studies, raises openness of best practice and prevents mistakes.

NTS are compulsory from 2013 and they are considered to make a significant contribution to transparency.

I urge the NSW government to adopt such requirements – particularly for that research which is funded by taxpayers – so that there can be greater transparency and accountability regarding the use of animals in medical research.

Current legislative changes banning the testing of cosmetics products on animals illustrate that it is both possible and preferable to adopt non-animal methodologies. As a next step, this must be extended to the use of animals in other areas of research. It is evident that Australia should establish a government-funded institution dedicated to the replacement of animals in medical research. Suggested interim measures include:

allocating a percentage of medical research funding specifically for the development of research methods that will replace animals;

awarding a state or federal prize for innovative research replacing animals; and

implementing grants to enable researchers to seek replacements for animals in medical research.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are distributed for medical research every year. As the validity of animal testing is increasingly questioned, Australian research is in danger of becoming irrelevant. Hence, there is a compelling argument for allocating a significant proportion of funding to provide financial incentives for researchers to develop alternatives – as is already happening in other nations.

The introduction of a ban on the The Forced Swim Test (FST) which is a behavioural test conducted on animals in laboratories around the world, including Australia. It involves the dropping of a mouse or a rat into a beaker of water to observe its ability to swim, unable to escape. At first, animals panic and try to escape by attempting to climb up the sides of the beakers or even diving underwater in search of an exit. They paddle furiously, desperately trying to keep their heads above water, until eventually, they start to float.

The test is used to assess learned helplessness, which is a feature of depression-like behaviour in mice and rats. It is used in psychological studies and to test the efficacy of anti-depressant drugs.

The use of mice in experiments including those that involve the forced inhalation of cigarette smoke whilst restrained in small inhalation chambers, is unethical, unnecessary, and unreliable.

It is increasingly acknowledged that the translation of animal research fails in the clinical setting, highlighting a compelling need to develop models on which to base scientific research.

I urgently request the end these methods of research and instead utilise advanced humane biology-based methods in order for results to be directly relevant to human health outcomes.

Further, the 'Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (2013)' states that methods that replace or partially replace the use of animals must be investigated, considered, and where applicable, implemented. What methods were considered?

Kind regards

Raymond Kennedy