

MEDIA RELEASE

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Alcohol and Depression Studies on Mice - cruel and wasteful research

Humane Research Australia has condemned a recent experiment feeding alcohol to mice as yet another tragic example of the unethical, cruel and pointless research carried out at Australian universities.

The experiment⁽¹⁾, conducted by researchers at the Florey Institute of Neuroscience and Mental Health, University of Melbourne and published in 2013, involved feeding alcohol to the mice over a six week period. After a further period of two weeks forced abstinence the mice were subjected to a series of anxiety-related tests. These tests included the [forced swim test](#) whereby they were placed in a beaker filled with water, and from which they cannot escape.

The study concluded that the provision of running-wheels through the abstinence period reduced depressive behaviour.

HRA Chief Executive Officer, Helen Marston: *“The study is limited by the use of overly assumptive and simplistic tests on another species to inaccurately draw conclusions about humans.”*

“The authors note ‘depression is a condition that presents with a wide spectrum of symptoms and that the effectiveness of running to correct each possible symptom of depression has yet to be determined.’ They also acknowledge that ‘it is likely that specific experimental conditions such as animal strain as well as mode or intensity of the exercise may account for the mixed effect of exercise’. This questions the relevance of how the information can be extrapolated to human conditions.”

“Furthermore, the conclusions drawn, i.e. the potential value of physical therapy for the treatment of addiction-related neuropsychiatric symptoms, is something that is well-established and has already been comprehensively studied in human clinical trials.”

¹ Depression-related behaviours displayed by female C57BL/6J mice during abstinence from chronic ethanol consumption are rescued by wheel-running, Pang, Terence Y. et al.

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<http://www.humanersearch.org.au/case-studies/feeding-alcohol-to-mice-then-inducing-depression>