



19 January 2006

The General Manager
Australian Ethical Investment Ltd
GPO Box 2435
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Sir,

Re: Animal Welfare policy.

The Australian Association for Humane Research Inc. is a non-profit organization that challenges the use of animals in medical research on both ethical and scientific grounds. We maintain that real medical progress can only be made through studying our own species and not artificially-induced diseases and conditions in animals.

I am writing in response to numerous requests from our members concerned about your company's position on the use of animals in medical research, and have been advised that you will shortly be undergoing a review process to address this issue.

Firstly, we acknowledge and appreciate the ethical stance that Australian Ethical Investment takes on many issues – indeed our own staff use AEI for their superannuation.

While there is concern from many about the cruelty and ethical arguments about the use of animals in medical research there remains much confusion in this area – particularly the perception that animal use is a “necessary evil” for medical progress. It is in fact detrimental to HUMAN health to rely on animal tests.

Species differences

Extrapolation from animals to humans can and does result in dangerously misleading outcomes. The reason is due to species differences. Different species have a different genetic make-up and it is on the genetic and molecular level that variances occur. Results can differ between different sexes of the same species, different strains, and even due to different housing conditions or levels of stress within the same species. So if such differences can occur within the same species then it's negligent to extrapolate from say a rat to a human – two totally different species with a totally different genetic make-up. Researchers also often claim that animals are used because they need to test in a living system rather than on isolated cells or tissue, however an entire living system creates more variables which can further affect the outcome of any results.

Another problem is that quite often a disease that is being researched does not appear in its natural state but instead is artificially induced in the research animal. This can result in the same symptoms being expressed but the underlying illness is not the same as in its human form. Treatments then try to cure the symptoms of the falsified illness but is not addressing nor curing the real problem.

Examples of failures

Researchers cite a number of examples of which they consider the use of animals to be integral. However they do not provide any measure of how the perceived 'successes' compare with the number of delays and disasters animal use has caused throughout history. For example:

- 85% of drugs that reach clinical trial fail to attain general distribution (which certainly questions the efficacy of animal tests).¹
- The development of the Polio vaccine, often cited by researchers as an example of the necessity of animal experiments, was long delayed due to misleading results from primate experiments. This was stated under oath by Dr Sabin (inventor of the polio vaccine)²
- Penicillin was delayed for 50 years and blood transfusions for more than a century.

We are constantly reading news headlines that breakthroughs have been made in the cure against cancer yet today it remains one of the greatest killers in the Western world. What we don't hear are the many drugs that are recalled on a daily basis – drugs that have been “successfully” tested on animals and have later proven to be dangerous to human health.

Some recent examples:

In July 2002, over nine million women worldwide who have been prescribed Premarin as a hormone replacement therapy have since been advised that it has been found to greatly increase the risk of breast cancer, heart disease, strokes and blood clots in the lungs. Premarin was introduced in 1942 by Wyeth-Ayerst and is one of the most prescribed drugs in the United States. In Australia, 300,000 women have been urged to seek advice from their doctor.

Vioxx is another recent example which was recalled in September 2004. It's a medication for arthritis and has now been found to increase the risk of heart attack and stroke.

These are only a few examples in which literally millions of lives may not have been lost had we not relied on the dangerously misleading results from animal experiments. Had we instead looked more closely at human conditions, then we can only wonder how much further we may have progressed by now.

When animal research does work

Many researchers acknowledge these arguments against animal experiments, but they insist that some advances HAVE been made by using animals. However these could have been made through other means. Additionally, many discoveries were made by non-animal methods, and later experiments on animals only further verified these breakthroughs as being correct.

William Harvey for example, has been credited as being the first to provide an accurate description of the blood's circulation in 1628 through using animals (although it has been reported that the Chinese understood the blood's action as early as 2,650 B.C.E.). However Dr Lawson Tait (one of the most famous surgeons of the nineteenth century responded:

"That he [Harvey] made any contribution to the facts of the [blood circulation] case by vivisection is conclusively disproved... It is, moreover, perfectly clear that were it incumbent on anyone to prove the circulation of the blood as a new theme, it could not be done by any vivisectional process but could, at once, be satisfactorily established by a dead body and an injecting syringe."³

¹ Dr Robert Coleman of Pharmagene PLC, giving evidence at the House of Lords Select Committee on Animals in Scientific Procedures (April 2002) UK.

² Dr Ray Greek MD, Proof of Evidence supplied to University of Cambridge in response to their planning appeal for a proposed primate research facility.

³ Tait, L. (1882) Transactions of the Birmingham Medical Society, quoted by Greek, R and Swingle Greek, Jean, (2002) Specious Science

Ovarian function was demonstrated by physician Dr. Robert.T. Morris in 1895 in surgical procedures on women, yet history credits the discovery to Emil Knauer who one year later reproduced the procedure in rabbits in 1896.⁴

Banting and Best are often cited as having discovered insulin through animal experiments in 1922. However further investigation of the history of diabetes reveals that this is not the case. The discovery of insulin dates back to 1788 when an English physician, Thomas Cawley, performed an autopsy on a diabetic. Unfortunately subsequent research on animals delayed the acceptance of his hypothesis. Despite the existence of insulin already being well known, it was evidence obtained from Banting and Best's dog experiments that was the convincing factor for scientists.

It seems that all too often researchers insist on animal experiments in an attempt to verify any discovery, however the use of animals to further work does not change the fact that a technique or discovery was made without animals.

The situation is best summed up by Dr John McArdle in his statement:

"Historically, vivisection has been much like a slot machine. If researchers pull the experimentation lever often enough, eventually some benefits will result by pure chance." Dr John McArdle, Animals Agenda, March 1988.

Such logic however, does NOT constitute good science.

Summary

The use of animals in medical research can never be justified. This is based on both ethical and scientific grounds. There has been too much damage caused by the inaccurate extrapolation of information from non-human animals to humans, and with 21st century technology we should be moving away from such archaic research methods and looking toward more humane and scientifically-valid methodologies.

Whilst researchers continue to use animals in medical research they are wasting precious resources - time and money - that should be used to find better, more ethical and scientifically-valid ways

We therefore hope that any investments made by AEI do not include those institutions or companies that conduct animal-based research.

I thank you for considering our request. Should you require any further information on any of the above I will be happy to discuss further.

Yours sincerely,

Helen Rosser
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Association for Humane Research Inc.

⁴ Greek R. and Swingle Greek, Jean (2002) Sacred Cows and Golden Geese.