



MEDIA RELEASE

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Call to end monkey brain experiments as research deemed scientifically redundant and misleading

Humane Research Australia welcomes a new paper, published by Cruelty Free International, which refutes claims by primate researchers that neuroscience experiments on monkeys have been, and continue to be, essential to medical progress

The extensive review, **'Non-human Primates in Neuroscience Research: The Case Against its Scientific Necessity' (1)**, authored by scientists, Dr Jarrod Bailey and Dr Katy Taylor from Cruelty Free International, concludes that:

- Neuroscience experiments on monkeys are of only speculative value to humans.
- Due to the important differences between primates and humans in brain structure and function, data collected from monkeys used in neuroscience research are misleading and of poor relevance to people.
- The significance of results from ethical neuroscience research in humans is being underestimated by researchers.
- Researchers who use monkeys in neuroscience experiments are inflating the importance of such primate research, which is being incorrectly attributed as being crucial to some historical medical breakthroughs.

According to the latest available statistics (2014), over 200 nonhuman primates are used in experiments in Australia every year. Some of these monkeys are used in neuroscience; an area of research recognised to inflict substantial suffering.

Cruelty Free International, along with Humane Research Australia, believes that because of the high welfare cost to the monkeys and the unlikelihood of any real benefit for human medical advances, this work should be ended.

In 2014, Cruelty Free international released the findings from a joint investigation detailing the appalling suffering of monkeys used in neuroscience research at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics (MPI) in Tübingen, Germany (2). The macaque monkeys were subjected to highly invasive brain surgery to implant recording devices in their skulls, and were forced to sit totally immobilised by their heads for hours at a time in front of computer screens, whilst recordings were taken from their brains. The monkeys were forced to take part in these experiments by being deprived of water, sometimes for days, so they would 'cooperate' for rewards of juice, and by being restrained for many hours every day for months in 'primate chairs'.

Similar research has been conducted in Australia.

The suffering the monkeys endured at MPI — demonstrably severe and stressful — was downplayed by the researchers, but was also justified via claims of substantial human benefit. However, in their paper, Drs. Jarrod Bailey and Katy Taylor, have shown that:

- The claimed human benefit is simply assumed, rather than based on robust evidence.

- The human relevance of data from monkey neuroscience is wholly overstated, as is the contribution of monkey experiments to past breakthroughs and to future progress. For example, the report describes hundreds of ethically conducted studies in humans to date.
- The capability of alternative research methods that do not use monkeys, and their contribution to our knowledge of the human brain and to medical progress, are greatly understated.
- Issues that confound the translation of monkey data to the human brain—such as species differences and effects of stress and anaesthesia—are overlooked.

The paper argues that the evidence for the role that primate research has played in various so-called ‘medical breakthroughs’, such as the development and interpretation of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI; ‘brain scanning’ technology) and deep brain stimulation (DBS) in the treatment of Parkinson’s disease related tremors, is flawed for all these reasons.

The new paper asserts, “The defence of nonhuman primate use is groundless, and neuroscience would be more relevant to and successful for humans should it be conducted with a human focus.”

Cruelty Free International, and Humane Research Australia, are calling on funding bodies and national governments to end the use of primates in these experiments.

Dr Jarrod Bailey, lead author of the paper and Senior Research Scientist at Cruelty Free International, said: *“The increasing power of human-specific methods, including advances in fMRI scanning and other non-invasive approaches, as well as invasive techniques that are performed with consent during brain surgery, renders monkey-based approaches redundant. Monkeys used in these experiments, as well as those people waiting for science to deliver a better understanding of neurological diseases and treatments for them, will both benefit from a move towards ethically and scientifically superior alternative methods of research.”*

ENDS

For the full paper, further information or quotes please contact Martin Mallon; email: media@crueltyfreeinternational.org or telephone: 0207 619 6978

NOTES TO EDITORS

Reference

1. Bailey J & Taylor K. (2016). Non-human Primates in Neuroscience Research: The Case Against its Scientific Necessity. ATLA 44, 43-69.

<http://www.atla.org.uk/non-human-primates-in-neuroscience-research-the-case-against-its-scientific-necessity/>

2. <https://www.crueltyfreeinternational.org/what-we-do/investigations/monkey-experiments-max-planck-institute-germany>

Cruelty Free International is one of the world’s longest standing and most respected animal protection organisations. The organisation is widely regarded as an authority on animal testing issues and is frequently called upon by governments, media, corporations and official bodies for its advice or expert opinion. **Website:** www.crueltyfreeinternational.org

Humane Research Australia is Australia’s leading anti-vivisection group. The use of primates in research is one of its major campaigns: www.BanPrimateExperiments.org.au.