

Animal Testing Controversy Explained

By Bailey Mattox September 12th, 2015



Understanding Animal Testing "[Rabbit in Research for Animal Testing](#)" 11/27/12 via Flickr.
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What is the issue?

In recent months, the animal rights group [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#) made new claims about the cruel and unnecessary treatment of the animals involved in laboratory testing. Other animal rights groups also claim that the research facilities responsible for the animal testing are not held accountable for the violations they commit in animal testing policies.

Research facilities however maintain the stance that they treat their animals as humanely as possible, and that the animal research is essential to medical progress. The two groups have thus far been unable to find effective compromise on this heated issue.

What is PETA claiming?

In an [article](#) by PETA on this issue, the animal rights organization claims that “[research] facilities imprison millions of animals... each year to conduct cruel experiments that cause immense pain and misery and are irrelevant to human health”. This statement brings up the paramount controversy in this topic: are animal experiments the best way of testing products?

Animals in laboratories are most often used for the development of products, specifically cosmetics, that are meant to be sold for human use. The developers of the new product use animals that are genetically similar to humans to test the products. These animals include mice, rats, dogs, guinea pigs, non-human primates, and cats, as well as various others. This process is used in order to be sure that the product is safe for human use, without having to test potentially dangerous products on humans themselves.

What are research facilities saying?



Drew from Zhrodague "[drewzhrodague - 0507 - Thanks to animal research they can protest](#)" 10/16/05 via flickr.

Many animal activists and scientists claim that alternatives to animal testing are available. Some countries are even planning to phase out animal testing altogether in exchange for cell culture testing. However the [National Association for Biomedical Research](#), a prominent organization for the use and humane treatment of lab animals, claims that animal testing “has led to significant new treatments, cures and therapies and continues to revolutionize science and medicine”. The NABR even credits the development of prominent cancer drugs, Alzheimer's treatments, and other disease treatments to the use of genetically modified rodents in testing.

The issue is far from resolved, however many new developments bring into question the legitimacy of using animals as a form of product testing. The center of the controversy is whether the medical benefits to mankind outweigh the ethical issues associated with making using animals for testing worldwide. This is an issue worldwide, and many countries have started taking steps to eradicate animal testing.

Worldwide and U.S. progress

Countries around the world are changing their guidelines and laws regarding animal testing to conform to public opinion. Until last summer, China actually REQUIRED animal testing in the production of cosmetics. However the Chinese food and Drug Administration has [ended](#) this requirement, instead allowing the companies to test using alternative methods.



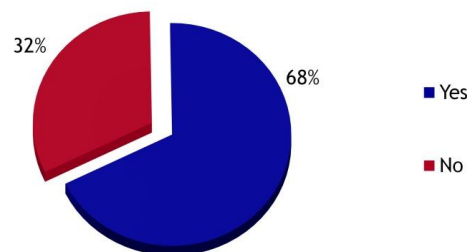
Sajoo, Amyn “[Animal rights activists protest against Indian drug company Vivo Bio Tech's plan to build a lab in Malacca, Malaysia](#)” via theguardian.com

There has been an increasing global trend to end/limit animal testing since the European Union [banned](#) the sale of animal tested products in 2013. Many European countries have at least started to look for alternatives to using animals in the labs.

Argentina and Russia are two such countries. In August, both nations introduced bills that would phase out animal testing altogether within a period of 5 years. These changes are largely due to a partnership with [Cruelty Free International](#), an organization trying to ban animal experimentation around the world.

Animal Research is Necessary for Progress in Human Health

Do you believe the use of animals in medical research is necessary for progress in human health?



Source: *Your Congress - Your Health* Survey, March 2011
Charlton Research Company for Research!America



[In America in 2011](#), 68% of those polled believed animal research to be necessary, while only 32% did not.

However in America, animal testing is maintained as a leading way of testing new products. According to an organization called [Americans for Medical Progress](#), the medicines made through animal testing “have contributed... [to] 10.7% of the increase in life expectancy at birth in the United States”. But the question still remains, what are the alternatives to animal testing, and how effective could they potentially be?

Alternatives to Animal Testing



The most prominently addressed alternative to animal testing is using [cell cultures](#). This developing field is suggested by many scientists and animal rights activists as a humane alternative to animal testing.

Dr. Alan N. Goldberg of John Hopkins University and Andrew Rowan of the Humane Society of the United States claim that cell cultures offer many advantages. In their article “[Conceptual Approaches in Toxicology Testing](#)”, they claim that actual human tissue can be used. These *in vitro* methods are helpful because animal genetics can only get so close to that of a human, and so the results can never be 100% accurate when using an animal subject. This is part of the animals righters claim that animal testing is not actually beneficial. Added to the ethical implications, *in vitro* cell culturing is seen as a viable possibility for future research.

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[“Biology Research Laboratory Technology Medical Lab”](#)

09/12/14 via pixabay. CC0 Public Domain

However, this method has its drawbacks. As Rowand and Goldberg point out, “a cell culture is a relatively static system in which the dose of the test chemical reaching the target system and the duration of contact may not be the same as those that occur in the *in vivo* tests”. In other words, the cell culture is not a fully functional being. In animal testing, the animal provides the researcher with the perfect subject in that it accurately shows what happens in a living example. Also, a cell culture is not a full body, but just one small part of the system. And while this would demonstrate the reaction of one part of a human system, it can not represent the complex body of a human.

While cell cultures may be the key to the research of the future, it still has a long way to go before it's perfect. And meanwhile, medical progress must still be made. At the

moment, American research institutes are sticking with what they know in the animal testing method.

What is the desired end result?

The desired outcome of this debate obviously depends on your position of the topic. If you believe that animal testing is nothing but an unethical attack of innocent creatures, then your desired end result is probably for legislation to be put in place to end the experimentation. Allison Aubrey's [article](#) about a "legislative fix" might interest you if this is the case. She talks about the importance of public action and how it is important to push through legislation to eliminate the loopholes for the research companies.



Imágenes Gratis Online "[Beagle Dogs in Research for Animal Testing](#)" 1/06/15 via flickr. Attribution 2.0 Generic

However if you are on the other side of the issue, you likely believe that animal testing is an important part of medical progress. Luckily, even if the animal regulations change, legislation eliminating animal testing still seems to be a long way off in America. The research showing the benefits of animal testing is firm, and the progress in important disease cures is hard to ignore. This is a very heated topic that isn't likely to resolve quickly. After such a long history in this country, animal testing is not likely to end here soon; however this is an ongoing story that is sure to have a very controversial future.

