

Introduction to Students for Ethical Science



On the Open University

At its inception, the Open University (OU) was a pioneer, founded by people with vision and courage.

Whilst it has developed a superb learning system and has top-class course designs and materials, it appears that at least some sections of the University have lost sight of some of the aims of the founders.

Today, where the thorny issue of animal experimentation is concerned, the Open University has clearly not embraced the proud tradition of debate for which universities such as Oxford and Cambridge are famous. *Students for Ethical Science* (SES) has been trying for over twelve years to engage the OU in debate on this subject, but has been met with censorship and silence.

Separating out the Open University's animal use

Thousands of animals are killed every year by the OU in two different arenas, firstly in education and secondly in research. SES campaigns peacefully to separate these two areas, as they are in law, and to stop animal abuse, or at least to curtail the non-ethical use of thousands of animals.

Education

Experiments are taught to undergraduate students using animals and non-ethically sourced animal tissue; that is, tissue from animals that have been bred purposely to be killed for students to experiment on.

This is ethically wrong.

These experiments have been done for years. No new ground is broken and there are no benefits to the animals; whilst the same educational results, and better, can be obtained using video and computer simulations, self-experimentation, plants and microorganisms.

One film of one dissection or experiment can be used by thousands of students, thousands of times, and the fact that students find hands-on animal experimentation "fascinating" cannot justify this abuse of animals. It must stop.

If the OU wishes to continue to use animal tissue it must be ethically sourced, e.g. from road-kill or from donated tissue, not from animals bred just to be killed for the purposes of teaching old tricks to new students.

Research

OU research includes using chicks, mice and rats. They are used in research into human conditions – a practice that has been, over and over again, proved to be misguided.

It is bad science.

Researchers will toil for years and years finding out what goes on, for example, in mice and rabbits and chicks. What they actually discover is what goes on in mice and rabbits and chicks. It will not tell them what goes on in owls, in whales or in humans.

To find out what goes on in humans you must investigate humans using the many humane alternatives that include computer simulation, human post-mortem, clinical, epidemiological and scanning studies and *in vitro* work.

As Richard Klausner, a director of the National Cancer Institute (USA), said "The history of cancer research has been a history of curing cancer in the mouse. We have cured mice of cancer for decades – and it simply didn't work in humans."

What a waste of resources.

On drugs

Many of you may feel that the lives of your loved-ones or even of yourselves have been saved or enhanced by medical research using animals.

Mouse or rabbit?

Alexander Fleming set penicillin to one side for a decade because it didn't work in rabbits. In desperation he reached for it to aid a dying patient and it worked. It works in mice too.

With disastrous consequences Thalidomide was prescribed to pregnant women after being tested on mice. It was pretty bad for rabbits too.

So what have we learned? Rabbits and humans are alike for one drug, but not for another. So are we humans more mouse than rabbit, or is it the other way around? The truth is that we are not the same as either of them. It is due to common evolution.

Humans are like humans

Or are they? Having concluded we are not like animals, we must ask ourselves - how alike are we to our neighbours? Or even those of the opposite sex - there are drugs that are known to work for one, but not the other. One drug will work well for me, but not for you. The only answer is for research into human conditions to be carried out on humans.

Where's the money?

Until more funds are put into humane and human research such as computer simulation, human post-mortem, clinical, epidemiological and scanning studies, and *in vitro* work we will be stuck in this hit-and-miss culture of providing medication in the hope that it's hitting the right target. But as long as big business continues to fund governments, and governments to fund

researchers to continue with the only kind of research they were ever taught, alternative methods will be under-funded, to the detriment of human health.

On summer schools

If you are getting wound up about the thought of losing your summer school if you can't experiment on animals or use their tissue you should question the role of the summer school.

If the sole purpose of summer school is animal experimentation - well, you might as well do that at home. Grab your brother and see how his muscles move after you've chopped off one of his legs.* But if the purpose is to get students together to bounce ideas off each other, to support and to question, to step outside the confines of the syllabus for a moment and open their minds - then why should summer schools be lost?

It is not ethical to carry out experiments on animals that are bred just for that purpose so you should not take part in them, nor should you be required to do so.

*Under no circumstances should you do harm to any animal, brother or otherwise.

Europeans For Medical Advancement

Europeans For Medical Advancement (EFMA) is a non-profit making organization that disseminates information regarding the true sources of medical achievement and counters false propaganda.

For more information please contact them at: PO Box 38604, London W13 0YR and ask for their excellent leaflet: "Of Mice, Money and Medical Misconceptions - The Truth About Animal Experimentation" or email them at efma@curedisease.com or visit their website www.curedisease.com



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