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Animal Testing: The Ethical Dilemma of Animal Mistreatment in the Medical Field

Animal Testing has often been a subject of debate in our modern world. However, it wasn't always. Animal Testing first originated from early Greek physician-scientist practices. They dissected animals to satisfy anatomical concerns and curiosities. Animal Historical Researcher Nuno Franco states, "For most ancient Greeks, using live animals in experiments did not raise any relevant moral questions. The supposed likeliness of humans to their anthropomorphic deities granted them a higher ranking in the *scala naturae* ('the chain of being')…animals were part of a natural world created to serve humans…and humankind did not have any obligations to them." Basically, animals were considered a tool to humankind. They had no rights. Unfortunately, this attitude towards animals has translated to our current society, especially in the medical field. Though there have been acts and laws passed to recognize and protect animal rights, animals are still exploited in many circumstances, especially in medical and scientific facilities. This is especially apparent in medicine and vaccine development, where the results benefit humans, but sacrifice animals in the process. So to what extent are medical discoveries - including vaccine development - worth the mistreatment of animals? While medical discoveries have significantly advanced human health, the ethical concerns regarding the mistreatment of animals in research must be addressed by prioritizing the development and implementation of alternative and more effective methods to ensure humane treatment.

Though there are many cons to animal testing, the most obvious and impactful is the harm it causes. Animals in research often endure pain, stress, and suffering. They may be subjected to invasive procedures, confinement, and even death depending on the project. In an interview published by the Animal-Free Science Advocacy with previous medical scientist Norma Graves, the mistreatment of animals in some research facilities is exposed. Graves is currently a social worker in mental health and animal advocate, but was previously microbiologist in infectious diseases for four years. She says: "I was in a hospital where they had an animal house, with rabbits, dogs and rats. Over the years, they had different employees coming and going and none of them seem to have any compassion or care for the actual animals… If an animal didn't do what they wanted, they'd just sort of chuck it across the room." There is very little respect for animals in many research facilities. Not only are these animals injected with potentially dangerous vaccines and medicines, but they are also abused by professionals. The International Humane Society also spoke out against animal abuse in an informational article focused on animal testing. It states: "All procedures, even those classified as 'mild,' have the potential to cause the animals physical as well as psychological distress and suffering. Often the procedures can cause a great deal of suffering. Most animals are killed at the end of an experiment, but some may be reused in subsequent experiments." Again, animals suffer in more ways than one during these experiments. The mental distress that these tests and procedures cause animals is exceedingly harmful, not to mention the physical pain they endure. The concern for animal safety is a leading motivation in the fight against animal testing. The pain that animals endure, both mentally and physically, in these experiments is not worth the often unreliable results they produce.

Another concern with animal testing is the differences in human and animal DNA. Results from animal testing may not always accurately predict human responses. Significant biological differences between humans and animals can make some research findings unreliable or irrelevant. This can lead to ineffective or harmful outcomes when applied to humans. Aysha Akhtar, animal ethicist and CEO of the Center for Contemporary Sciences, shares more information in her article, "The Flaws and Human Harms of Animal Experimentation." She says:

> "The high clinical failure rate in drug development across all disease categories is based, at least in part, on the inability to adequately model human diseases in animals and the poor predictability of animal models. A notable systematic review, published in 2007, compared animal experimentation results with clinical trial findings across interventions aimed at the treatment of head injury, respiratory distress syndrome, osteoporosis, stroke, and hemorrhage. The study found that the human and animal results were in accordance only half of the time. In other words, the animal experiments were no more likely than a flip of the coin to predict whether those interventions would benefit humans."

There are modern alternatives to animal testing, such as in vitro testing (using cell cultures), computer modeling, and advanced imaging techniques, which can provide more accurate and humane options. Promoting and investing in alternative methods can lead to scientific advancements without harming animals. With the recent advancements in technology, specifically in the medical field, these alternative options are far more ethical and actually less costly. Animal testing can be expensive and time-consuming compared to some alternative

methods. So it is really worth putting animals through often dangerous procedures when there are more reliable practices.

Growing awareness and concern for animal welfare have led to greater demand for cruelty-free products and practices. Increasing regulations and laws are being implemented to reduce or ban animal testing, especially for cosmetics and other non-essential products.