Vivissection

Vivissection has been a large part of scientific research, education and product testing for centuries. The term vivissection can refer to any experimentation on animals, including non-invasive psychology research, product testing or dissection, even for medical or educational purposes. There is now a growing number of people, including scientists, who would like to see the abolition of such practices, though many more still maintain that vivissection is a vital part of medical research and education.

The Medical Community generally agree that animals are vital in all stages of biomedical research, not just safety testing. The purpose of biomedical research and testing is to understand the living body and what goes wrong to cause disease. This needs to be done in order to develop new and effective ways of preventing and curing disease. New medicines developed in this way not only benefit humans, but also animals, as new veterinary drugs and methods are also tested in order to assess their worth and effectiveness.

However, animal rights activists and other anti -vivissection organisations maintain that despite these limited benefits to the animals, vivissection is flawed on both scientific and ethical grounds. Scientifically vivissection is flawed as animals are both biologically and physically different from humans. Opponents of vivissection say that scientific benefits are highly questionable, and that the ninety-five percent increase in human life expectancy has more to do with sanitation and lifestyle improvements than with medical discoveries made with the aid of vivissection.

It is nearly impossible to take data from experiments on one species and apply those results to members of another . Results of vivissection all too often do not produce results that can be related to humans. In order to get these worthless results animals are often burned, starved, irritated, shocked, mutilated, kept in isolation, poisoned, drugged and electrocuted. This, according to animal rights activists and other anti-vivissection organisations, is cruel and unnecessary. The medical community, however, disagree.

They say that these experiments are necessary in order to make our lives better. Their moral argument for using animals in this way is that animals are not as valuable as people as they are not as intelligent and they do not have the capability to reason. Animal rights activists and other anti-vivissection organisations argue that this argument is flawed, as if we were to follow it to a logical conclusion, we would be able to justify experimentation on mentally disabled people or even children.

They also argue that rights are not given to people based on their intelligence level, but on our empathetic knowledge that not to do so could potentially cause them great harm and suffering. Nevertheless, animal research has played an important role in most major medical advances in the last century. We have all benefited from vaccines and antibiotics to treat and prevent illnesses. Most of us, at some time or another, will also have benefited from anaesthetic used in all forms of surgery.

Medicines can now overcome serious conditions such as diabetes, asthma and high blood pressure. None of these major medical advances would have been possible if it had not been for vivissection. In 1998, the British Medical

Association published a survey of doctorsi?? views on animal research. It shows that most believe that it is a necessary and humane practice that will play a key role in developing future treatments. However, animal rights activists and other anti-vivissection organisations argue that there are other effective ways of doing medical research.

For example, studies in the test-tube have many advantages over animal-related experimentation, as they provide results more rapidly and are more easily controlled. Also, cellular and molecular levels of the life process provide more useful information about the effects of chemicals and drugs. Another line of argument against vivissection is that animal experimentation can have some very tragic consequences if the medical results acquired from vivissection actually have a totally different effect than expected when applied to people.

Even when the the species being used is very similar to us, the results can be very different. For example, chimpanzees have up to ninety-nine percent of the same genetic material as we do, yet they are not susceptible to many of the diseases that afflict humans, nor do they have the same reaction to drugs and procedures. Drugs that are not harmful to a chimpanzee could potentially do great damage to, or even kill, a human. Animal research is also used in cosmetic testing. This, according to the companies who use animals to assess the safety of their products, is in order to protect consumers.

Animal rights activists and other anti-vivissection organisations, however, argue that vivissection in these circumstances is entirely unnecessary as

many other companies manage without its use. Animals who are tested are often subjected to the Draize skin and eye irritancy tests, the lethal dose fifty, and lethal dose one hundred tests, where animals are fed chemicals, to a set dose, to see if it kills them. Another major use of vivissection is in schools, where animals are dissected in Biology-related subjects.

Live, or even fresh specimens of animals, are needed here, if students are to truly understand anatomy. Though animal rights activists and other anti-vivissection organisations do not dispute the need for actual animals to be used in the study of Biology and Veterinary Medicine, they argue that the practise of studying and dissecting live animals is cruel and unnecessary. They say that the animals should either be put down humanely, if a fresh specimen is required, or they should only be used and dissected in education, when they are already dead and, therefore, cannot feel pain.

When trying to justify vivissection, pro-vivissection organisations always maintain that the animals, used in medical research, are well taken care of. There are regulations and guidelines for the care of laboratory animals. Most of these, however, while they set standards for very basic animal upkeep, place no limitations on the actual experiments themselves, nor on the conditions under which the experiments are performed. If a researcher wants to test the effects of force-feeding arsenic to puppies, and is able to acquire the grant money, they could do so.

Equally, if it is claimed that painkillers or anaesthesia would corrupt the results of a study, a researcher has the right to withhold it, even if that means obvious pain for the animal. After considering all sides of the

argument on vivissection it would seem incontrovertible that, although vivissection has valuable medical uses, it is extremely cruel and, in a lot of cases, unnecessary and unjustified. With regard to vivissection's medical usefulness, there are many other methods of scientific research that would be less cruel and just as effective.