

VISION OF A NEW ERA

The use of animals in biomedical research is perhaps the most volatile and controversial of all the issues facing the animal-protection and medical communities.

As a physician, I have a great interest in the advancement of medical science to improve the health of humans and other living beings, but I also have a great interest in the protection of animals, and I can tell you that it has not always been easy or pleasant to reconcile the priorities of these two communities when it comes to this issue.

A number of animal-research advocates have called upon physicians everywhere to "defend medical science" and have been highly critical of physicians who seriously question practices within the field of medicine in regard to animal research, testing, and education. In the course of discussing so-called "extremists" and "radicals" in the animal movement, many animal-research advocates have begun to apply these terms not only to the few individuals engaged in violent, unlawful tactics but also to anyone who would advocate any change from the status quo, no matter how small.

With many of the voices currently emanating from the medical community so adamantly opposed to animal protectionists, and with the public and lawmakers historically having looked to the medical community as the primary source for defining public policy in this area, all of us who are seeking any type of change may feel a bit overwhelmed at times. Indeed, although it is very encouraging to see immense progress in

many areas of animal protection over the past decade or two, in the area of biomedical research and testing, relatively little progress has occurred over the past century. All of this may logically lead you to ask: in the face of such overwhelming opposition to change, is it really possible to accomplish anything substantive in this area?

My answer to this is a resounding "yes." I am convinced that substantive progress can and will occur in this and many other areas because of the power in the underlying motivation for those involved in animal protection. The power of love and compassion for all life, combined with the ability to recognize the deeper identity of other sentient beings, instills within the human spirit an enduring and unfailing energy to protect and care for nonhuman as well as human life. Simple as this may seem, none of us should underestimate the power of this motivation.

There are other reasons for optimism on a more tangible level, not the least of which is that there are a growing number of physicians and scientists, including individuals at academic institutions, who simply do not buy the status quo in this area.

In addition, I would contend that physicians and scientists, including those presently opposed to animal protectionists, are for the most part otherwise caring, loving individuals and that this characteristic provides them with a strong potential to awaken to the importance of recognizing a higher priority for animals, given the proper circumstances.

In the meantime, however, the situation has become so sufficiently charged that

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many animal-research advocates are resorting to rather extreme statements in order to sway opinions within the medical community and general public.

There are a number of fallacies being perpetuated that need to be challenged by those who truly give a high priority to the well-being of animals and want to see some kind of balance in the presentation of this information.

The first of these is that human health and animal welfare are incompatible. A number of organizations and individuals within the medical community have been telling the public and their legislators that *any* modifications in the current animal research and testing process would be too threatening to human health to justify the risk. This simply is not the case. There are substantial opportunities to incorporate the mainstays of HSUS policy in biomedical research, testing, and education, including the three Rs of refinement of techniques, reduction of the numbers of animals used, and replacement of animal methods with other techniques. Indeed, I would submit that the current volume of animal use in biomedical research, testing, and education could be substantially reduced without any ill effect on human health whatsoever.

A second fallacy is that animal-protection groups threaten the future of medical science. Challenging the status quo is seldom easy. Usually those who profit from or strongly identify with a given institution will react defensively and with incredulity when someone questions the established order. This has led to a perceived dichotomy and adversarial relationship between the scientific and animal-protection communities. Yet, I would contend that animal-protection organizations can and should have a *positive* impact upon the scientific community (and upon society) by serving as a stimulus for changes that would otherwise be unlikely to occur.

Among these are advances in legislation such as the Animal Welfare Act, which, despite its many shortcomings, represented a step in the right direction, as is now acknowledged by both the animal-protection and medical communities. Prior to the original act and its sub-

sequent revisions passing into law, most organizations and individuals in the medical community advocating animal research were strongly opposed to these changes—now many of these same scientists and organizations cite the legislation as beneficial but oppose any further changes. Yet, 75 to 90 percent of the animals used for research in this country are not even covered by the Animal Welfare Act, and provisions applicable to performing the research procedures themselves are minimal.

The animal-protection community can and should also serve as a positive stimulus for the development of alternatives to the use of animals in research and testing, and I think the Russell and Burch Award is a good example of this.

In challenging the status quo, I would challenge my colleagues in the medical community—if we have a genuine priority for the well-being of animals, the medical community should be *embracing* the animal protectionists' concerns rather than rebuffing them. We should delight in finding and implementing solutions which accommodate these concerns and welcome the opportunity to do so.

A third fallacy involves the recurring theme put forth by animal-research advocates that all—or virtually all—major medical advances have relied upon and occurred because of animal experimentation. This is an important consideration because, if one accepts the premise, one is led to the conclusion that animal research may be the only means at our disposal to advance medical science. It is understandable that animal researchers and academic scientists would tend to value the significance of animal research, and there is certainly substantial basis in fact for recognizing the contributions of scientists and science based upon the use of animals in research. However, to generalize from the facts and claim that all or even most biomedical knowledge of significance is derived from research using animals is a sizable distortion of the truth and reflects poorly upon those propagating it. It also sells short the myriad of clinicians and clinical researchers who, over the years, have made incredible contri-

butions to medical knowledge without the use of animals.

Let me make a few comments about alternatives to animal research. Most physicians and scientists would agree that the development of alternatives to using live animals in research is desirable. Indeed, some encouraging progress is being made in this area with regard to the use of tissue cultures and other *in vitro* testing, as well as mathematical and computer models. However, we should not be under any false illusions that all of the findings of animal research can be reproduced in a computer model or tissue culture given our current level of technology and understanding. It is disappointing that a number of animal-research advocates have taken this a step further and all but dismissed alternatives as severely limited while criticizing animal protectionists for exaggerating their potential. Some have expressed alarm at the idea that animal-protection groups would *hope* for the day when the use of animals in research could be completely abolished, stating that this reveals the underlying "radical" nature of these groups.

Yet it is many of these same scientists who, despite their scientific knowledge, fail to think more broadly about the concept of alternatives.

Even though there are many instances where we cannot produce a specific piece of information without using live animals, we need to be open to the possibility that that piece of information may not be needed to solve the clinical problem we are addressing. In this circumstance the "alternatives" concept becomes somewhat broader and focuses upon the end result rather than specific types of information.

Seeing this issue through the eyes of both a medical researcher and animal protectionist has taught me that the priority and motivation for finding alternatives to the use of animals differ considerably among individuals involved in these disciplines, and this undoubtedly accounts for at least some of the lack of progress in developing alternative methods. In addition, there has been very little incentive to physicians

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and researchers to develop these methods from the standpoints of available funding and academic career development. One of the things that we who are involved in animal protection need to do more of is to think of ways to motivate and inspire physicians and animal researchers to utilize their scientific knowledge and innovativeness to develop other means to address health problems.

Perhaps the time has come for all of us to recognize that humankind's greatest goal, which outweighs lengthening life through medical advancements, is to evolve spiritually and that in order to do this there is a need for us as a species to learn to think of other beings as ends rather than means. I would hate to think that being a physician or scientist meant that one could not care deeply about the well-being of sentient beings other than human beings. For those involved in animal protection, a deep caring implies more than lip service. It implies placing a high priority on securing humane conditions for animals as well as humans, even in the face of incurring substantial extra cost. It involves a careful and critical look at projects and areas in which animal research is highly unlikely to benefit human or animal health, and/or is grossly inhumane, and a cessation of those projects. It implies a high priority for the development of alternatives to the use of animals in research, testing, and education. We should be devoting considerably more time and resources to the development of such alternatives. The main reasons we are not doing so involve convenience, extra cost, the ease of using previously learned methods as opposed to developing new ones, and the lack of enough true concern about other sentient beings besides human beings.

The title of this talk included the phrase, "vision of a new era." I have already indicated to you today that I am convinced that we are on the verge of an era where things will change more substantively in this area. This will come about either with cooperation between the medical and animal-protection communities or without such coopera-

tion, through increasing pressure from public and governmental sources. The latter circumstance would take longer, and the ultimate result would be far less congenial to the medical profession. Fortunately, I think there are enough intelligent and compassionate members of both the animal-protection and medical communities to warrant optimism that a cooperative effort will constitute the road we travel.

The primary mission of the medical profession is to alleviate human suffering, the achievement of which is often enhanced by various advancements in medical knowledge including the development of new technologies and treatments. The animal-protection community simply wishes to extend this alleviation of suffering to other beings besides human beings.

I am convinced we can have both.

I am convinced we *must* have both in order for us to evolve as a species.

This then constitutes the beginning of a new era when both the animal-protection and scientific communities realize that many of their goals are the same and that society and medical science can work toward improving human health while also working to eliminate the need for the use of animals in biomedical research, testing, and education.

In the image of this era, I see a day where the initiatives of the animal-protection community are *welcomed* by the scientific community and where all of us begin to come to the conscious realization that it is compassion for all life rather than scientific achievement that represents the pinnacle of human existence.

I see a day when all medical schools and veterinary schools require ethics courses with substantive discussions about animals, not merely as objects for humans to utilize in any way that may presumably benefit our species, but rather as independent sentient beings.

I see a day when medical schools and research facilities clearly recognize that it is their obligation to *humanity* as well as animals to develop nonanimal research methods to advance human health

and that, yes, it *can* be done because they have the will and the desire to do it.

I see a day when human vanity and convenience are no longer sufficient to justify the suffering and killing of other species and the use of animal testing for the cosmetics and household-products industries can be eliminated.

I see a day when scientific investigators are so moved by compassion that their brilliance and ingenuity are directed toward thinking about and developing innovative alternatives to animal research and testing rather than innovative ways to avoid changing the status quo.

Some may call all of this wishful thinking—and certainly I don't claim to have a crystal ball or to be able to put some precise time frame on any of this. However, there are a number of factors which make the coming of this era inevitable.

I have already alluded to the power of the underlying motivation of "compassion for all life" which drives the animal-protection movement.

It is also important to recognize that all humans have within them the potential to awaken to this motivation and that we as a species have an underlying need to do so in order to evolve spiritually.

Thirdly, and perhaps most revealing, is the observation that this is indeed a one-way street. For those individuals who have awakened to the virtue and necessity of a "compassion for all life" ethic, there is no turning back. Rather, these individuals continue to evolve toward perfecting this ethic in their own lives and in the world around them.

The evolution of our species will mirror that of its individual members. As with other significant changes in social attitudes throughout history, the opposition will be formidable; the process will be cumbersome, costly, and frustrating; the means to achieving change will be varied; and the road will be trying and sometimes discouraging. But, the result will be glorious—think about it: a world that will foster not only harmony between humans and other animals, but also between humans and other humans. ■