

THE REALITY OF ALTERNATIVES

The development, promotion and utilization of alternatives to vivisection is not an attack on scientific research. It is simply a matter of supporting appropriate and humane methods, rather than blindly continuing traditional approaches to understanding biology and both animal and human health problems. Everyone benefits from a focused effort to replace the use of animals in biomedical education, research and testing. By supporting the development and use of alternatives, anti-vivisectionists are able to promote the interests of animals, lessen the degree of their exploitation, to support needed research and improve animal and human health. It also enables us to avoid being labeled as anti-science and anti-research and of putting the welfare of animals above that of humans. The reality of alternatives is far more exciting than the pro-vivisection propaganda would suggest. Consider that:

- **NOBEL PRIZES** – Since its inception in 1902, two-thirds of the prizes were awarded in medicine and physiology to researchers who primarily or entirely used alternative techniques.
- **HUMAN HEALTH AND WELFARE** – Recent scientific studies document that an insignificant contribution toward the advancement of human health and welfare was made through vivisection.
- **EDUCATION** – Alternatives are now available for all uses of animals at primary, secondary, university and graduate levels.
- **SAFETY TESTS** – These classical animal-based tests can be replaced by alternatives currently available or in the final stages of validation.
- **BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH** – All fields now depend on alternative techniques for continued advancement.
- **ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE** – All significant advances have been derived from alternatives-based experiments. Supposedly valid animal models were recently described as either irrelevant or fraudulent.
- **THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE** – More appropriate humane alternatives have been selected over several of its animal-based procedures.
- **AIDS** – Alternatives have contributed more to the increased knowledge and development of vaccines than any animal experiments.
- **PROTECTION** – Legal protection for manufacturers and political protection for regulatory agencies have created the continued emphasis on animal-based safety tests more than any legitimate attempt to protect the public.
- **AND THE LIST GOES ON . . .**

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF ALTERNATIVES

Some alternatives have been in use since the beginnings of biomedical research and have made possible well-documented and critical advances in the fields of biology and medicine. However, it is only since Russell and Burch articulated the concept of alternatives in 1959 that a formal identity, basic principles and strong impetus have been ascribed to the targeted search for medical and scientific progress without animal experiments. In their seminal publication, *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*, the two English scientists called for replacement, reduction and refinement strategies to reduce the suffering of animals in laboratories and create professional interest in efforts to avoid vivisection in every possible instance.

Private charities were formed in Europe and the United States in the 1960s to sponsor the development and promote the use of new alternatives. By the late 1970s major national and international conferences were being held to discuss and encourage the use of alternative techniques. In 1985 Congress directed its Office of Technology Assessment to prepare a comprehensive review and analysis of alternatives. The final report represents a landmark in the historical support for the development of alternatives. By the late 1980s multiple private charities, including The AAVS, were successfully funding the development of new alternatives, commercial toxicology laboratories were offering replacements for traditional animal tests and all three of the principal United States regulatory agencies formally announced their willingness to accept safety information derived from some of the alternative methods.

It is now clear that the future advancement of biomedical research, education and safety testing depends on the further development, enhancement and adoption of alternatives to the traditional values and practices associated with animal experimentation. The historical trends and accomplishments are obvious and undeniable to anyone who cares to examine them. Ghandi once commented that "the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated." Support for the development and use of alternatives provides a means by which each individual can contribute toward the humane growth of our society and a better life for ourselves and the animals who share it with us.