

TRIAL
VERSION

IS SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON MONKEYS JUSTIFIED?



- To explore the arguments
 - To expand your understanding
 - To express your views
- ... all in 15 minutes

Open Up! has been produced by the Democracy and Participation programme at **nef** (the new economics foundation). It is one of a range of practical tools developed by **nef** to re-engage people with democracy and decision-making. It has been funded by the Wellcome Trust, which wants to help people to grapple with complex scientific issues.

background

We start with some background on the issue.
When you have read it, ***Open Up!***

Whether scientific research on monkeys is justified is a hotly contested question – which is again in the headlines, as MEPs consider calls for a phasing out of the use of monkeys in research, under revisions to EU law.

Each year in UK laboratories around 3,000 monkeys are used in scientific research and testing. These have to be licensed under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act because it has the potential to cause the monkeys pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm. These 3,000 monkeys are around 0.1% of the total annual use of laboratory animals in the UK.

Housing for macaques in the UK



Macaque: 3092 used in 2008

Marmoset: 262 used in 2008

Monkeys, like humans and great apes (such as chimpanzees and orang-utans), are members of the biological group known as primates.

Great apes have not been used in biomedical research in the UK for at least 25 years; and the Government formally banned their use in 1997. Modern methods of housing and care of monkeys in the laboratory aim to meet the animals' behavioural and psychological needs. In best practice they are housed in groups with plenty of environmental enrichment, space to play and exercise, opportunities for all normal social interactions and foraging.

Housing for macaques in the UK



Picture source: Understanding Animal Research

what is ?

'Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge, Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?' asked the poet T S Eliot. The amount of information we have just keeps on growing, and it becomes harder and harder to make sense of it.

Open Up! is designed to help. It provides:

- Some background (which you have probably just read)
- Stories to get you thinking about the issue
- A series of arguments (when you open up again). These are divided up into sections, each with a question, and a set of paired 'yes' and 'no' arguments.
- Many opportunities for you to engage with the arguments and have your say – you'll need a pen or pencil.

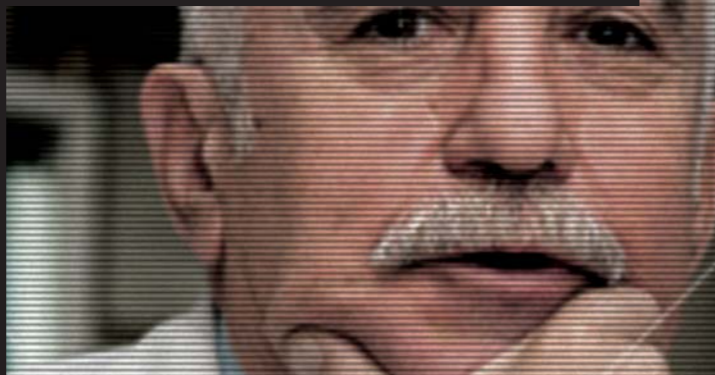
The arguments are simplified, to contrast the 'yes' view and the 'no' view. But they are not meant to force you into an extreme position – you can choose from a range of options when giving your views.

How you use the *Open Up!* is up to you. Write as much or as little as you like. But if you can send in your feedback, it will affect *Open Up!*. This second edition of *Open Up!* has different arguments from the first edition because of feedback from readers.

So, when you are ready, read the stories to the right of this page, and then... **Open Up!**

A SCIENTIST'S QUESTION

'Does improving the quality of life of suffering patients justify the use of monkeys?'



I am a surgeon and also a scientist, and part of my work has involved inducing Parkinson's disease in monkeys. My research showed that an area in the brain never previously associated with Parkinson's was overactive. By operating to reduce its activity, we can very significantly reduce the symptoms of Parkinson's. To date 40,000 people have been helped, and I would guess that only 100 monkeys were used.

My question is, do you agree with me that the benefits of my work justify the use of monkeys? Would it make a difference if the research had needed many more monkeys? What if the monkey experiments were not specifically for a new treatment, but to gain more knowledge about how the brain works, which one day might be useful in developing treatments for Parkinson's?

Source: Professor Tipu Aziz (Monkeys, Rats and Me, BBC2, 27.9.06, slightly edited)

A MEAT-EATER'S QUESTION

'Am I a hypocrite if I worry about experiments on monkeys but eat meat?'



I am worried by the use of animals, including monkeys, in experiments. But I am not a vegetarian and don't feel the same concern about eating meat.

I am not alone in this: around 5% of the UK population say that they are wholly or partly vegetarian¹, whereas more than half say that they are 'very' or 'fairly' worried by the use of animals in research that aims to cure diseases.²

Why do I feel this unease – especially since, for every animal used in research and testing in the UK, at least 700 are killed and eaten as meat?³

For me, a big part of it is the possibility that laboratory animals might suffer more than farm animals. How do you feel about this?

Source: 1. Food Standards Agency 2008. 2. RCUK Public Attitudes to Science Survey 2008. 3. Understanding Animal Research 2009.

A MEDICINE TRIAL PARTICIPANT'S QUESTION

'How reliable is research using monkeys – would I trust my health/life on it?'



I am thinking of volunteering for a 'Phase 1' trial of a new medicine to treat cancer. A Phase 1 trial is the first time that a new medicine is tried in humans, and usually involves a few healthy volunteers.

The medicine has been tested in test-tube and animal experiments. These include tests in monkeys, which are the only animals with chemical 'receptor' sites for the medicine that are similar enough to humans for the medicine to work. These tests have revealed only minor side effects.

My question is, can I trust the monkey experiments enough? I am reassured that the medicine has been tested in animals, but I also remember media stories about people suffering unexpected, and very serious, side effects in a recent trial. Do you think I should volunteer?

You might like to know what the people who tried out the first edition thought. Their top three arguments taking Support and Challenge together were A6, C3 and C4.

The initial text for this version of *Open Up!* was developed by Jane Smith, Secretary of the Boyd Group. The Boyd Group is a forum that brings together a wide range of perspectives on animal experiments. Jane was working in a personal capacity.

The text was amended – and reduced – in several rounds of testing, using feedback from both topic experts and general readers.

It's new and it's work in progress, so we'd appreciate any comments. Send them to: Perry.Walker@neweconomics.org or contact him on 0207 820 6360

Where next? We haven't space here, but if you want some sources of information to explore further, links will be available in future on our website at www.neweconomics.org/amap