

Animals in medical research

Over the last few years the biomedical research community, in response to numerous attacks from animal welfare and anti animal-usage groups, has produced a number of popular and semi popular leaflets and booklets defending animal-based research. The two publications considered here are typical examples of the material that has been produced. '*Animals and the Advancement of Science*', a booklet from the British Association for the Advancement of Science, is a systematic expansion of the six point declaration on animal experimentation originally put forward at the Annual Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1990. Amongst other things, it lists and briefly discusses a number of medical discoveries that were largely dependent on the study of animals and it claims that research using animals is essential to the understanding of disease processes and in the development and testing of new treatments. '*Understanding Animal Research*' is a booklet in a less formal style, which has been sponsored by the Animals in Medical Research Information Centre and has been paid for by the pharmaceutical industry. It covers in essence the same ground as the British Association's booklet but in a more popular manner.

Both booklets have a case to make and there is certainly need for simple factual pro-research information to balance the material put forward by the anti animal-use groups. Before a balanced judgement can be made both sides of the argument have to be presented and discussed.

The two booklets make the point that in the UK there is a law which strictly regulates animal experimentation but they both largely fail to state the moral dilemma: man has probably benefitted enormously from animal research but this benefit has often been bought at the expense of substantial animal suffering.

It may be that short booklets just do not have the space for a balanced discussion of the many factors involved in any cost/benefit analysis of this dilemma - but the general reader should know that there *is* a dilemma and should be informed about the arguments which may or may not go towards its resolution.

Animals and the Advancement of Science Working with Animals in Medical Research Produced and published by the British Association for the Advancement of Science: London (1993). 10pp. Paperback. Obtainable free of charge from The British Association, Fortress House, 23 Savile Row, London W1X 1AB (ISBN 0 900902 09 4).

Understanding Animal Research A Booklet in the Understanding Health Series Edited by Dr Richard Hawkins and Edwina Conner (1993). Hawker Publications Limited: London. 15pp. Paperback. Obtainable free of charge from the publishers, 13 Park House, 140 Battersea Park Road, London SW11 4NB, UK.