

stroyed every year. Some 250,000 of these animals are giving answers desperately needed for improved medical treatment, while 15 million are incinerated. It is in fact the researcher, not the activist, who assigns the greater value to those lives. What an enormous legacy from the pound dog used in the lab, as compared to 15 million of its mates.

"We don't have to have advanced techniques in surgery and medicine to treat established disease since it is mostly preventable by now, with healthier lifestyles, and improved nutrition, "the activists moralize. But in the imperfect world in which I practice, I don't know enough to successfully treat, let alone prevent, many of the problems I see. I wear a seat belt and try to drive safely, but I do not find time to preach about this during resuscitation in the emergency room.

To say that we can stop research because we already know enough, but just need to apply our knowledge better, is a cruel hoax to many accident victims, most patients with cancer, and all victims of AIDS. To give up on the most successful method of obtaining real results—immediately applicable to human and animal illness alike—is more than anti-intellectual. It is suicidal. And this lethal decision is the more detestable since it is not limited to one's self.

"We have alternatives to animal research, not being adequately used, to improve treatments," say the animal rights activists. Where? Enter the computer, a proposed substitute for flesh and blood in the laboratory. If it worked satisfactorily as a substitute, which of us as teachers/re-

tion is wrong. How do we know that, or how do we know that the output product doesn't work? By testing it in life. Life is not hypothetical, and it is continually correcting our mistakes. We welcome any technique that will help us to get to the truth. There are no *alternatives* that are satisfactory substitutes, only *adjuncts* to help ultimately test where we practicing life scientists work.

"After all," the animal rights advocates insist, "animals and humans are so different. All the tests are fallible. Use patients with disease, not healthy animals, to do your research." We do, within ethical bounds. Do any of your potential patients wish to step forward to generously offer to test an untried drug, device or operation? The only conscionable treatments I can employ in clinical research with patients are those for which there is proven promise of therapeutic results—proven in biomedical research models. Without that proof we cannot raise the hopes of patients. The activists' argument also ignores the use of animal-proven treatments for animal benefit.

"Experiment on criminals, or volunteers, or prisoners, or defective people, or limit the subjects to those people who would directly benefit from the research product, rather than experiment on innocent, healthy animals." All patients are innocent. All people alive have paid their dues. All deserve the benefits of health care science.

Such are the arguments voiced by those who have the luxury of discussing in the abstract the relative ethics of harming var-

tem, the solutions are direct and immediate benefits of biomedical research that have produced, tested and taught us what we know and can do.

What if the patient is the animal rights advocate with whom you have argued? Assume that the vegetarian patient in plastic shoes and cotton clothes insists that, to be consistent with his position, no treatment be employed that has been developed through animal research. What in your black bag can still be used? Since there is, I believe no medical practice that qualifies, you might offer to treat the patient anyway despite his beliefs. As an individual, he might still refuse. That is his right. We do not impose treatment, nor do we impose our beliefs on him. But do not let him make that choice for you, for me, for all of our present patients, and for those yet to come.

That animals might live, we cannot let those patients die.

Glenn W. Geelhoed

## References

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## BOOK REVIEWS

### *They Threaten Your Health*

Ernest Verhetsel

Tucson, AZ: Nutrition Information Center, 1986, 115 pp., index, \$13.95

For the first time, perhaps, there is a publication on the public book shelves that defends the use of laboratory animals in biomedical research. Usually, book marts are limited to those publications that condemn the use of laboratory animals; scientists seldom take the time to write for public consumption.

The publication is *They Threaten Your Health* and is described as a critique of the antivivisection/animal rights movement. The author uses the pseudonym Ernest Verhetsel.

If the reader is looking for a publication that trashes animal activists, there will be disappointment. What the publication does do is to examine the issues, in general, and the writings, in particular, concerning the now centuries-old conflict between the scientists and those who advocate the abolishment of the use of live animal models for biomedical research. And it is the latter that he does best, thus making the publication a worthwhile consideration for purchase.

In reviewing the literature Verhetsel provides references throughout that a reader may wish to check for the accuracy of the statements. In one chapter he examines 15 pamphlets and 11 books written by animal activists wherein "the truth" (the statement used by the animal activist) and

"the whole truth" (the complete text from which the statement was taken) are presented to show how statements taken out of context are used to mislead the readers of those pamphlets and books.

While *They Threaten Your Health* does not rank as high in readability as some of the books published by animal activists, nevertheless it still is worth both the time to read it and to recommend its readings to those who are unsure about their beliefs regarding the use of laboratory animals in biomedical research.

William M. Samuels

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