

We're glad you're here, and grateful for the opportunity to expose you to the reality of the lives of laboratory primates from the perspective of the people who know them best - their caregivers and research technicians. This site will reflect their current status quo, including laboratory conditions, on-going behavioral and biomedical research, and efforts to abolish the use of nonhuman primates in invasive procedures. We also intend for this site and our group to be a haven for former and current primate lab workers. We feel certain that there are others out there like us in LPAG - care techs, research techs, vet techs, and former researchers and veterinarians - who know what it means to befriend a biomedical research subject, and who have learned from the monkeys and chimpanzees that their use in invasive or semi-invasive research is wrong and must be ended. To these ends, we have provided documents, statements and ideas that cover a wide range of issues from animal rights and legal aspects of research to husbandry and welfare issues to caretaker empowerment and support.

LABORATORY PRIMATES

Nonhuman primates utilized in biomedical research include several species of macaques [usually rhesus, jivas (also known as long-tails or cynomologous), and pig-tails], mangabeys, baboons, Sykes, squirrel monkeys, capuchins, and the only nonhuman great ape in invasive research - chimpanzees.

LPAG feels an obligation to speak out about the species we know best. The group was formed out of a specific need to bring the truth about biomedical research out into the open, to speak on behalf of the primates and tell the stories which would never be told. We have come together because of our passion and love for the monkeys and apes we have befriended and cared for; LPAG's strength comes from that love, and from the experiences we have found to be common to the laboratories in which we have worked.

We feel that the term "laboratory primate" most accurately describes who these individuals are. Monkeys and nonhuman great apes incarcerated in laboratories today have become a population distinct from their wild counterparts. Most of them are created in laboratory breeding programs, and thus have histories and futures distinct from those in the wild. After generations of captive breeding, these individuals are shown to have adapted in many profound ways to the laboratory environment. The philosophical, economic, practical and ethical issues surrounding their use are unlike those affecting any other population of nonhuman animals in the human world.

We make the distinction between "primates in labs" and "laboratory primates" because the latter term reminds us that these individuals were not generally taken from the wild, but were born and raised to be research subjects, and deserve unique consideration.

CAREGIVERS AND RESEARCH TECHNICIANS

LPAG's Board of Directors is comprised of current and former caregivers and research-technicians. We have welcomed veterinarians and former researchers onto our Advisory

Board, and hope we will be joined by others as general members in the future. Whatever name we use to describe ourselves, the responsibilities of caregivers and technicians in the laboratory are similar. In the labs, we are involved in every aspect of the nonhuman primates' lives, including - but not limited to - feeding meals; cleaning cages and enclosures; assessing health status; providing enrichment, entertainment and love; assisting with invasive and semi-invasive medical procedures; and collecting behavioral data. We do it all, and we see it all from the perspective of our charges.

Lab caregivers and research technicians are the people who spend the most time with the monkeys and chimpanzees in laboratories. We become intimately acquainted with their personalities, habits, emotional, social and physical needs and their health conditions. We are the liaison between the research subjects and the veterinarians and research teams - we provide the voices for individuals whose interests are often ignored or supplanted by the demands of scientific protocols and laboratory life.

Caretakers and research techs frequently find themselves participating in many aspects of the research, from blood draws, to moving animals for breeding, to participating in knock-downs (anesthetizing an individual) and other invasive medical procedures. Because of our close relationship to the nonhuman primates, it is often difficult for us to take part in situations we do not believe are in the best interests of our friends, or which we know will cause pain and suffering. For some of us, these feelings move beyond mere discomfort, and we become actively opposed to biomedical research.

OPPOSITION TO BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

It is very likely that at the beginning of a career in biomedical research, the laboratory worker will be required to answer this question: "Your little sister is dying of a dreadful disease, and the only way to save her life is to sacrifice a rat, a bunny, a dog, a monkey and a chimpanzee - would you do it?"

But what are the real implications of this question? The decision to use nonhumans for biomedical research does not confront each of us individually - it confronts us as a society, and as members of the human species. Is it ever proper to trade one life for another? The question - one which many of us in LPAG once answered in the affirmative - changes parameters when, after working in research for some time, we begin to ask ourselves "would we sacrifice these monkeys or chimpanzees for whom we are caring for an anonymous population of humans?" It is not uncommon for a monkey or nonhuman great ape to become as important to us as a friend or family member. The answer to the original exercise becomes an emphatic "NO."

In addition to the ethical arguments against research on nonhuman primates, a growing body of knowledge exists which casts grave doubts on the utility of animal-based studies. Many studies are duplicitous, frivolous, or just plain inapplicable to human welfare. A monkey is not a tiny human, and it's physiology often does not mimic human responses to pathogens. Researchers put enormous resources into making the physiological responses of research subjects emulate those of humans, or guessing at a probable human response based on nhp-specific data. In the laboratory, it is impossible for some of us to know of this inherent failure of nonhuman primate models, watch the suffering of our charges, and remain indifferent.

ABOLITION AND WELFARE

LPAG believes that the laboratory is no place for monkeys and nonhuman great apes - the rigors of good science and the true interests of primates are mutually exclusive. "Humane" legislation will not be humane until it prohibits biomedical research on monkeys and chimpanzees. Because we have been witnesses to the atrocities of biomedical research, because we know the details of the lives and deaths of the research subjects, and because of our friendship with individual laboratory primates and the obligations that come with that friendship, we feel that it is our duty to work toward the end of biomedical research on nonhuman primates.

Even though part of our mission is to abolish nonhuman primate research, LPAG realizes that research on nonhuman primates will not end tomorrow. We have friends who remain in the laboratories - some being subjected to painful and distressful procedures - right now. These individuals desperately need our help and we are dedicated to ensuring their well-being until their use by humans comes to an end.

We hope you'll find LPAG.org to be a comprehensive resource. Please contact us if there's a topic you'd like to see included on the site.

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