

# I am not a Lab Tool

It is time to ask our government to fund “human-relevant” research: not cruel and misleading animal experiments.

*Australia is missing an opportunity to replace animal use in medical research.*

Despite our supposed commitment to the 3Rs principle of Replace, Reduce and Refine, Australia has made very little progress in replacing animals in research - as illustrated by the vast numbers of animals used each year (Australia has been cited as the fourth highest user) - and with growing concern within the research community that flawed animal studies are contributing significantly to failures in translational research - this is an area that requires urgent attention.

According to the FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration), in spite of huge research effort and expense, development of new treatments has slowed, as preclinical success has not followed through into clinical trials on humans. Latest figures have revealed a 95% failure rate of clinical trials following ‘successful’ animal tests.

In a discussion paper addressing health and medical research, the Victorian government has stated “compared with international standards, **Australia has a poor record of commercial translation...**” [Emphasis added].

The use of animals in research is, according to the code, “for cases where no alternative exists”, but alternatives will never exist without support for the development of non-animal based scientific testing. There have been international moves towards supporting alternatives to animals in research. Techniques such as computer modelling, genomics, nanotechnology, microdosing and microfluidic chips, just to name a few, have been developed with government funding and support to provide human-relevant models.

It is acknowledged that Australian funding bodies will accept applications for “3R’s research”, however their systems of application review mean that due to the high level of competition, those applications do not stand a realistic chance of success. Therefore, the only way such applications would succeed through the system would be for dedicated funds being set aside specifically for this area of research. We need this both to reduce animal suffering in labs and also to ensure that Australia is a pioneer at the forefront of developing new non-animal technologies which will be more likely to result in clinical application (i.e. of greater benefit to humans).

## Overseas examples of government funding

Around the world, a number of government-funded initiatives are addressing the need to further develop and validate non-animal methods of research, including:

- ▶ *NC3Rs, The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research, an independent UK organisation established in 2004;*
- ▶ *ECVAM, The European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM), established 1991;*
- ▶ *ICCVAM, The Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods (ICCVAM), established in the US in 1997; and*
- ▶ *ZEBET, The Centre for Documentation and Evaluation of Alternatives to Animal Experiments, which forms part of the German Federal Institute for Risk Management, Berlin, established in 1989.*

While other nations forge ahead in the area of alternatives research, Australia is missing an opportunity to excel in clinical translation.



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## Possibilities

Current legislative changes banning the testing of cosmetics products on animals illustrate that it is both possible and preferable to adopt non-animal methodologies. As a next step, this must be extended to the use of animals in other areas of research. It is evident that Australia should establish a government-funded institution dedicated to the replacement of animals in medical research. Suggested interim measures include:

- ▶ allocating a percentage of medical research funding specifically for the development of research methods that will replace animals;
- ▶ awarding a state or federal prize for innovative research replacing animals; and
- ▶ implementing grants to enable researchers to seek replacements for animals in medical research.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are distributed for medical research every year.

As the validity of animal testing is increasingly questioned, Australian research is in danger of becoming irrelevant.

Hence, there is a compelling argument for allocating a significant proportion of funding to provide financial incentives for researchers to develop alternatives – as is already happening in other nations.



We need your help. Fill in the form below today and donate or become a member. Help us to continue the fight to end cruel and ineffective animal experiments and promote more human-relevant research.

Visit our website [www.humaneresearch.org.au](http://www.humaneresearch.org.au) to sign our online petition urging the National Health and Medical Research Council to redirect funding into research that replaces animal experiments.

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### 5 I would like to become a member: \$30

6 Have you considered leaving a bequest to Humane Research Australia in your Will?  Yes  No

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