

Health through animal experiments?

Alarmist warnings about referenda

Before the national referenda in Switzerland for the abolition of animal experiments in 1985, 1992 and 1993, as well as the referendum for genetic protection in 1998, numerous personages from industry, universities, economic and political circles, as well as the media warned that the acceptance of these referenda would be a catastrophe for medical research and for the ill: Thousands of jobs would be lost, the animal experiments would be transferred abroad, and – their principal argument – human diseases could not be cured.

Elimination of thousands of jobs

Unfortunately, these alarmist warnings were successful and all of the referenda were rejected by the Swiss public. Nevertheless, the chemical-pharmaceutical industry has been eliminating thousands of jobs in Switzerland since 1985, and it has been increasingly transferring animal experiments to Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and the United States, where animal «protection» legislation is either nonexistent or very minimal.

Incurable diseases

Worse still: Despite the use of more than 20 million laboratory animals in Switzerland since 1985 – not to mention the hundreds of millions of animals used in the rest of the world – AIDS, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, lupus, multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, Huntington's disease, paraplegia and the majority of cancers, rheumatic diseases and cardio-vascular diseases not only remain incurable, but some are increasing on a massive scale.

The failure of gene technology

Attempts to cure these diseases through gene technology have also failed. Since the first genetic modification of a laboratory animal in 1980, tens of thousands of transgenic «animal models» have been created worldwide which supposedly «contract» human diseases. However, the 25 years of research with such animals and the use of several hundred gene therapies on more than 10,000 patients worldwide have led to extremely disappointing results: To this day, there exists no incontestable proof that a single patient has been cured, and since 1998 several patients have died due to a gene therapy.

The myth of medicines

Because the pharmaceutical industry is profit-oriented, it is logical that it has little interest in curing diseases from which it receives enormous profits. In this respect, it exploits people's elementary fear of disease and death by propagating the myth that health can be attained by taking as many pills as possible. However, because the majority of medicines developed through animal experiments do not cure diseases, but only combat their symptoms, patients often have to take medicines their entire life which have little effect but are extremely expensive – which of course is of great advantage to the pharmaceutical industry.

Devastating adverse drug reactions

According to the medical literature, adverse drug reactions kill more than 100,000 patients in the United States every year, which corresponds to the fifth leading cause of death in the country. If the responsible pharmaceutical firms had to pay damages for each and every one of these victims, they would have long ago been bankrupt. Instead, their profits increase year after year, thanks above all to animal experiments: In cases of death or disability due to adverse drug reactions, these firms indicate that they performed the legally prescribed «safety tests» on animals and are therefore not accountable. This is why the victims or their families most often come away empty-handed after suing for damages.

Abolish animal experiments

In reality, not a single disease is curable thanks to animal experiments, and the fixation on misleading and unreliable animal experimentation guarantees that human diseases remain incurable. In Switzerland, the economic costs of the ten most frequent diseases alone are estimated at 30 billion francs per year, and the tendency is increasing. It is therefore high time that animal experiments – which contribute neither to curing nor to preventing diseases, but rather to the cost explosion in the health care system – are abolished and that valid, reliable research methods are used which are of direct relevance to humans.

Association for the Abolition of Animal Experiments

President: Christopher Anderegg, M.D., Ph.D., Ostbühlstrasse 32, 8038 Zurich, www.animalexperiments.ch, Tel.+Fax: 044 482 73 52, Postal account 80-18876-5