Properly Moderated Public Scientific Debate

20th October 2014

Dear Understanding Animal Research,

Your letter of 15th October opens with another confirmation of your original tweet agreeing to a debate. This tweet pasted below states that 'We have helped organise over 30 debates this week. If you organise another moderated debate we are willing to take part'.

> **UAR: Animal Research**
> @animalresearch
> ✔ Follow
>
> @forlifeonearth We have helped organise over 30 debates this week. If you organise another moderated debate we are willing to take part
>
> 9:43 AM - 15 Oct 2013

When you organised 30 debates your debate motion was already established, invitations were then extended to speakers and students to take part. Evidently, there was no negotiation about the debate motion and the same applies here. Your tweeted agreement to take part in a debate acknowledges FLOE's role as the organiser; it was also sent in response to a tweet founded entirely upon EDM 263, not a public speech made by one of our members, delivered in layman's language for the benefit of those attending a march to promote this EDM.

Parliamentary EDM 263 calls for 'properly moderated scientific public debates on the misleading results' of animal experiments claimed able to 'predict' human medical responses.

You said before that all your scientists are too 'busy' to commit to being participants; and now that 'we cannot definitely commit a main speaker for the debate...because we have not yet agreed any logistical details ['nor the conditions']...you [FLOE] cannot seriously expect such senior scientists to clear their diaries for an indefinite period while you decide whether or not you can debate either of the motions' suggested by UAR. Clearly, we again need to remind you that the organiser of this debate is FLOE; you have agreed to be a participant. The first debate is to be: 'Resolved: Animal models have no predictive value for human response to drugs and disease'. Further, we are not asking for anyone to clear their diaries indefinitely. We are asking for scientists to come forward to debate this predictive question - who in so doing recognize this as a matter of enormous significance for the lives of countless human beings as well as other animals. Once the two main speakers are known, the rest - including a mutually agreeable date - can be determined through FLOE. The main speaker for the proposition will be Dr Ray Greek. The next practical step is for UAR to supply the name of the scientist who will argue against the proposition. Until this name of your main speaker is forthcoming we will not be drawn into other issues (including our agreement to your proposal of related themes for subsequent debate).

FLOE's scientific position on animal experiments would be very different if they were able to predict responses for human patients, but in fact they do not. Nothing explains better than a picture: scientists, together with their supporters, who claim that animal experiments are able to predict human medical responses are perpetuating an irresponsible and most harmful lie - they have built every one of their labs and careers on the disastrously unsafe ground of an active volcano! More than enough scientific evidence is already available to decide the question of the predictive value of animal models for human patients; this serious matter is now an increasingly topical subject, as highlighted by the Editor in Chief of the British Medical Journal in her Editor's Choice in June, 'How predictive and productive is animal research?'. Hypotheses, if they turn out to be false, need to be replaced by others; and science evolves through not merely modifications but revolutions. The difficulty is bringing about a change of attitude and facing facts without prejudice. Resistances of the will and vested-interest need to be overcome. The debate conditions are in the interests of scientific rigour (and neither moral nor political) to get something factual settled objectively. You will need to overcome your expressed difficulty of providing in writing 'all the information to be debated in advance as well as verifying all references...before the debate'.

UAR should be seen to be seizing this opportunity to try to silence its scientific opposition objectively in public with a presentation of facts. But the fact that you are dragging your feet on this critical issue, willing to focus on everything but the predictive issue itself is very revealing. This situation will continue to render your 'Concordat on Openness on Animal Research' an empty and valueless proclamation, as long as the predictive question is ignored, belittled or considered of such insufficient importance by your still unnamed scientists.

In closing, we hereby make clear that until the name of your main scientist is forthcoming we will no longer take part in lengthy letter dialogue. A copy of this letter will be sent to all supporting MPs.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Groves, Alex Irving, Deborah Minns and Louise Owen.

Directors (respectively of) Human Rights: Patient Group; NO to Animal Experiments (comprising the campaigns Save the Harlan Beagles and Oppose B & K Universal), and their flagship science-based campaign For Life On Earth.