



Maternal Deprivation of Monkeys at the UW - Madison

Guest editorial by Sujatha Ramakrisna MD

Using non-human primates as experimental test subjects is a long-standing tradition in neuropsychological research because the emotions and behaviors of these animals are so similar to our own. It is thought that information gathered during these studies can be used to help human beings. However, the entire idea of using primates in such projects has come under increasing public scrutiny in recent years due to the ethical issues involved. If the emotions and behavior of primates are so similar to ours, doesn't that make it wrong to intentionally cause them pain and suffering? In order to justify this mistreatment, researchers must show that there are benefits to be gained, ones which cannot be achieved using other methods.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin – Madison are currently conducting such a study, exploring the effects of maternal deprivation on baby rhesus monkeys. According to university documents, which are available as public records, their reasoning is:

“These efforts will allow us to identify the exact brain regions affected, the changes in gene function in these regions, and the specific genes that are involved in increasing the early risk to develop anxiety and depression. Such information has the potential to identify new targets in specific brain regions that can lead to new ideas about treatment and even prevention of the long-term suffering associated with early adversity. For example, understanding the involvement of brain chemicals that have never before been implicated in anxiety, will allow the field to begin to search for medications that affect these newly identified-systems. In addition, the molecular information, combined with the imaging data, may allow for interventions that target novel brain regions that are critically involved in anxiety and depression.”

This all sounds really fantastic. Discover the biochemistry and physiology of anxiety and depression in people who have undergone “early adversity,” and use this knowledge to develop new treatments that will improve their lives. This might make it worth it to remove baby monkeys from their mothers, raise them in isolation for the first 3-6 weeks of their lives, intentionally frighten them to cause them anxiety, and then kill them to examine their brains. However, from my perspective as a pediatric psychiatrist with fifteen years of clinical experience working with abused and neglected children, there are several problems with this kind of reasoning.

First of all, the research conditions under which these monkeys are raised in no way resemble any sort of conditions ever experienced by human babies. There is no such thing in medicine as a patient who was raised in complete isolation from other members of his species during the first few weeks and months of his life. Even premature babies who spend several weeks in the hospital ICU have human nurses looking after them and visitations with their human parents. Raising a monkey with only a cloth-covered “surrogate” for company is a unique kind of torture, never experienced by babies raised under even the harshest conditions of human societies.

Additionally, the “surrogate” model is a clumsy, oversimplified attempt at replicating the complex issues experienced by at-risk children. Pediatric psychiatrists see many patients in our offices who have grown up under “adverse” conditions, and they are hardly a uniform set. There are a wide variety of stressors that traumatized human children have to deal with, including various types of abuse and neglect, and these can never be replicated with any kind of accuracy using animal models. According to attachment theory expert Mary Ainsworth, even maternal deprivation studies in human children have questionable relevance when we attempt to apply them to common clinical situations:

“The term ‘maternal deprivation’ has been used also to cover nearly every undesirable kind of interaction between

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Maternal deprivation *(Continued from page 1)*

mother and child – rejection, hostility, cruelty, over-indulgence, repressive control, lack of affection and the like. A term used to cover all pathogenic variations of mother-child relations is too inclusive and hence confusing.”

Animal research based on overly inclusive definitions of “maternal deprivation” will likewise yield results that are misleading when clinicians apply them to real-life human patients.

There are other reasons that these kinds of studies are unlikely to be useful in the development of new treatments for anxiety and depression. Despite the onslaught of advertising messages delivered by drug companies about “chemical imbalances,” researchers know very little about how anti-depressant and anti-anxiety medications actually work. It is theorized that they increase or decrease levels of different neurotransmitters, resulting in changes in brain functioning, yet the exact mechanisms behind their clinical effects remain a mystery to scientists. Despite this lack of precise knowledge, these medications have helped millions of people. It is clear that dissecting the brains of baby monkeys to measure levels of neurotransmitters is not necessary to improve the lives of humans who suffer from mental illness. Additionally, using medications to change biochemistry can help alleviate psychiatric symptoms in many people, but without counseling and other forms of community support these symptoms will never fully resolve.

Community mental health centers are the front-line agencies that provide encouragement and support to at-risk families, and they are in dire straits during these tough financial times. Instead of using public resources to examine the neurochemistry of tortured baby rhesus monkeys, and hoping that the research translates into benefits for humans who have grown up under adverse conditions, a more effective approach would be to use those resources to help relieve the adverse conditions which lead to psychiatric symptoms themselves.

Redirecting our efforts away from questionable medical experiments, and towards direct patient care, would be a wise form of preventive medicine. It is a more pragmatic way of using public resources to improve the state of human society, and one that would be appreciated by patients and mental health care practitioners alike.

Dr. Ramakrishna holds an M.D. from Baylor College of Medicine, she completed a three-year residency in psychiatry at Northwestern University Medical School, a two-year fellowship in child and adolescent psychiatry at the University of Chicago Hospitals, and has thirteen years of practice as a clinical psychiatrist. Her book, Raising Kids Who Love Animals, offers a pediatric psychiatrist's perspective on the benefits of teaching children to have compassion for animals.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

To learn much more about Dr. Kalin's cruel and ill-conceived experiments on baby monkeys at UW-Madison and how you can help stop them visit www.uwnotinourname.org and look for UW Not In Our Name on Facebook.



Meet AFA's Newest Board Member

Gina Stuessy

Our newest member of our Board of Directors has hit the ground running. You will start seeing Gina and hearing her strong voice for the animals more and more as she continues her involvement with AFA. We asked Gina to share a little about herself - how she got started in animal issues, what she's currently working on, and to offer some advice for aspiring activists.

I started learning about animal rights issues and veganism when I met my boyfriend Ben, in 2009. His sister, Hannah West, who writes AFA's Simply Vegan e-newsletter, invited us to AFA's Chili Cook-off. Over time I learned more about the organization and started volunteering and attending events. I helped leaflet at the circus for the elephant ban, joined the goose patrol, and tabled at the farmer's market.

Recently, I've helped with the *Not In Our Name* campaign. I helped identify UW alumni donors who we contacted about the maternal deprivation experiments on monkeys at the UW.

Since its first year in 2011, I have been part of the team of organizers for Mad City Vegan Fest, and I am helping plan Vegan Fest 2013. I've also started helping with more administrative tasks like website updates and emails. While some of those tasks aren't directly helping animals, they're necessary to keep AFA going, and since AFA does a lot for animals, it feels good to help with those things too. I plan to continue offering my help in whatever areas my skills are useful.

The issue that concerns me the most is raising animals for

food, simply because the number of animals used is so much greater than in any other category. Animals on farms suffer greatly, and for no reason other than to satisfy our taste preferences and to keep up our inhumane traditions. This is an issue where we don't need to wait for laws or company policies to change. The suffering of animals in agriculture is something that everyone can personally reduce. Everyone can choose vegan meals right now, without any additional expense or trouble - especially if you choose to go to some of the many vegan-friendly restaurants in Madison! I encourage everyone to take steps toward veganism. And AFA's Simply Vegan e-newsletter can help!

Sign up online at www.simplyvegan.net.

My advice for aspiring animal rights activists is to volunteer with AFA! Alliance for Animals is open to new ideas about how to be active for animals, so if you have a certain talent or interest that could be tied in to helping animals, most likely AFA will support you in that. That's how Vegan Fest was born! Also, just stay in touch with other activists. Maybe you'll be interested in something they're doing, or vice-versa. Go to Vegan meetups, AFA events, and keep the discussion going.



A Memorial for the Wolves - January 11, 2013

AFA member Deanne (Dee Dee) Devaul was deeply disturbed by the Wisconsin wolf hunt this past year. She approached AFA for help in organizing a Wolf Memorial to honor the 117 wolves killed in the hunt. We publicized her event with press releases, websites, and on Facebook. Dee Dee symbolized the lives and deaths of each wolf with a candle for each one, that was lit and then extinguished during the ceremony.

Over two dozen concerned citizens joined in the memorial. It was a touching and heartfelt tribute that gained the attention of several media outlets, which in turn brought attention to the senseless killing of wolves in our state. Their lives will not go unnoticed. Thank you Dee Dee for your energy and commitment to the animals.





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Tributes



In memory of Chancey and Breezy. "My memories are of you galloping, with manes flying and soft nickers. Forever in my heart." from Robin Betian.

In loving memory of Bernard Theisen, "a loving family man and WWII veteran," from Amy Kerwin.

In memory of Winnie, Doe, and Arthur in honor of Helene Dwyer, from Donna D'aguanno.

In memory of Bob Devaul, father of Dee Dee Devaul and friend to many at AFA, from Rick and the Cookie Lady.

A special tribute to Lu Kummerow from Joyce Wells.

**Tributes of 20 words or less will be listed for a donation of \$25 or more. Pictures welcomed. Visit our Support page at www.allanimals.org or include your tribute in the enclosed envelope.*

Join Us!

Alliance for Animals Monthly Meeting
2nd Tuesday of each month, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
122 State Street, 4th floor Conference Room.

Our next AFA meeting is Feb. 12. This is a casual and friendly meeting where we discuss animal issues in the news and plan and organize our campaigns. Bring your thoughts, energy, encouragement, and willingness to help. Topics include hunting and trapping, animals in entertainment, animals raised for food, and many other animal issues.

Antivivisection Committee
1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month 6:00 - 8:00 pm
122 State Street, 4th floor Conference Room

This active group meets twice each month. Our main topic is the use of animals at the UW Madison. This is an active group, so bring your calendar and be prepared to do some work!