**ENG 201: Herbal Essences/Procter & Gamble White Paper**

By: Jessica Szczechowicz

12/15/2012

Many consumers are unaware of the research methods conducted by various brands in the hair care industry. Nevertheless, some hair care brands, such as Procter & Gamble’s Pantene and Head and Shoulders, place their products on the market at the expense of numerous innocent animals’ lives (Huff, 2012). However, there are other hair care brands, such as Procter & Gamble’s Herbal Essences, that have prohibited animal testing techniques from their laboratories and remain as successful companies in the industry. Since a successful hair care company such as Herbal Essences has no need for animal testing, why should other P&G hair care lines, such as Pantene and Head and Shoulders, use it (Huff, 2012)? Technology has advanced laboratory research enough to determine effective alternatives, which companies such as Herbal Essences have productively used over the years. The alternatives are the innovative and effective methods of the future; therefore, it doesn’t even make business sense for animal tests to be continued. Hopefully, P&G will continue to see the benefits behind using animal experimentation alternatives and will eventually replace all of their practices with non-animal testing procedures.

In an animal research laboratory, a rabbit’s blood vessels may be broken down, a live chimpanzee could have chemicals pumped directly into its mouth, or a mouse may have to suffer with skin that is covered in sores. Although consumers may beg scientists to do anything to ensure the safety of shampoos, conditioners and hairsprays, that doesn’t mean that animal experimentation is the only option. There are various alternatives that can be used as substitute testing methods to the violent, abusive and torturous techniques behind animal experimentation. Regardless of this finding and the proven success of humanely practicing brands, such as Herbal Essences, some of Procter & Gamble’s product lines (including Head and Shoulders and Pantene) continue to use animal testing for their products (Huff, 2012).

For example, one of the methods that is still in use today is the Draize Eye Irritancy and Skin Test. This test places drops of a hair care product directly into the eye of a living animal, which is usually that of an albino rabbit because the eyes of rabbits are larger than those of other animals and albino eyes are easier to make observations with because they are clearer (Welsh, 1990, pg. 70). The purpose of this test is to see the degree of damage that the product causes to the animal. To make matters worse, these rabbits are usually placed in stocks or collars in order to prevent movement of their heads, which gives scientists full access to their eyes and keeps the rabbits from reaching for their eye area (Welsh, 1990, pg. 70). Therefore, these rabbits remain constrained as scientists evaluate “redness, swelling, hemorrhage or corrosion” while they experience complete discomfort and lose their sense of sight (Welsh, 1990, pg. 70). Once the test is finished, these abused rabbits are “either killed or used for another test” (Welsh, 1990, pg. 71).

Furthermore, there is the LD50 Test, or the Lethal Dose Fifty Percent Test. In this test, a product is administered to a large group of animals, usually rats or mice, in order to test the toxicity of the substance (Welsh, 1990, pg. 61). This test shows researchers how much of the substance is needed to kill half of the group, which is usually a unit of at least one hundred animals (Welsh, 1990, pg. 61). As imaginable, those animals used in this type of test suffer various gruesome symptoms, such as “convulsions, labored breathing, tremors, paralysis, comas, and bleeding from the eyes, nose, or mouth” (Welsh, 1990, pg. 67). Unfortunately, the innocent creatures are left alone in excruciating pain to await their death. However, even those that do survive are often killed and dissected by lab workers so that it can be determined how their life systems endured such a high dosage of poison (Welsh, 1990, pg. 67). According to the “Material Safety Sheets” located on the Procter & Gamble website, the LD50 Test is used for P&G products, such as Gillette Foamy Shaving Cream and Crest Vivid White Toothpaste, however, none of the research done for hair care utilizes this test (Procter & Gamble, 2012).

Fortunately, these tests are no longer necessary. For instance, an existing animal testing alternative is to utilize computers. A common procedure for this alternative is to create a computer simulation (Welsh, 1990, p. 63). There are certain programs that have been developed which analyze scientific data about different chemicals and substances in order to predict an outcome of the safeness of a product containing those specific ingredients for human use (Welsh, 1990, p. 63). This could be helpful because it requires no tests and “predict[s] the probable biological response” as a real-life experiment would (Welsh, 1990, p. 63). Another procedure for replacing animal testing techniques with computers could be the creation of a product research database. After all, one of the basic operations of a computer is to store information; therefore, computers can store the data from past animal experiments and include specific information about them, such as recorded reactions and amounts of the substances used for the test. The formation of this database would mean that past animal experimentation and suffering did not go to waste because the information from their tests will be ready to be used in future research. This database is also helpful because it would eliminate repetition of animal testing, which would save other animals from experiencing tests that were already conducted and from which data was gathered.

In addition, another alternative is the use of in vitro techniques. This includes the use of cell and tissue cultures to determine the safety of a product, which would avoid the use of whole animals (Welsh, 1990, p. 61). With this test, hair care products could be easily analyzed in the absence of any harsh treatment to either animals or humans. If we had started by donating our cells to test the everyday products that we enjoy, how many animals’ lives would have been spared? This number may be uncountable; however, it can be said that if in vitro techniques are used more extensively that many animal’s lives will be saved in the future.

Correspondingly, P&G is now launching in vitro testing systems to conduct product research in all of their brand’s department labs. Specifically, they have begun to use keratinous (skin) tissues instead of applying chemicals directly to the skin of a live animal as they have done in the past (Henderson, 2012, p. 709). The keratinous tissues can be gathered as cultures from living humans and animals or it can be taken from cadavers. P&G has also started to use skin models, called artificial substrates, which are developed to have the same texture, appearance and reaction to substances as an individual’s own skin would (Henderson, 2012, p. 709) Therefore, even though there are many more replacement procedures available for them yet to utilize, at least the company is beginning to lean towards a more animal friendly facility.

This is good news for Herbal Essences, since they refuse to use animal research in their laboratories. However, P&G, their parent company, is a known animal tester. Therefore, with this recent change in P&G’s procedure, which is congruent with Herbal Essences’ practices, the brand becomes more credible. Furthermore, a change to absolute animal friendly methods may even lead to an increase in sales due to the strengthened company credibility. Thus, this replacement would make perfect business sense for P&G to do, so why do they continue such violent practices? It’s a question that may never be fully answered, but hopefully in the near future this question will no longer need to be asked. The alternatives could work just as well for all of P&G’s brands as they do for other companies; it’s only a matter of change on P&G’s part before they can truly become a totally humane and therefore wholly credible company.

Works Cited

Henderson, C. (2012). The Procter & Gamble Company; patent issued for coated substrate with properties of keratinous tissue. *Marketing Weekly News*, 709.

Huff, E. (2012, March 27). Procter & Gamble steeped in cruel animal testing of its consumer products, charge activist websites. Retrieved from <http://www.naturalnews.com/035365_Procter_and_Gamble_animal_testing_cruelty.html>

Procter & Gamble. (2012, December 12) Retrieved from <http://www.pg.com/en_US/brands/beauty_grooming/index.shtml>

Welsh, H. (1990). *Animal Testing and Consumer Products*. (p. 61, 63, 67, 70 and 71). Washington D.C.: Investor Responsibility Research Center Inc.