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Animal Testing for Cosmetic Use Is Completely Unacceptable

As most citizens of the United States would agree, the country’s use of cosmetic products has become so extensive that many people use such merchandise daily or even multiple times in a day. In most cases, there is nothing wrong with women applying makeup to brighten their face each day or men spritzing themselves with cologne to smell more appealing. However, what many of these consumers and product users do not realize is that some of their favorite cosmetic products are put on the shelf only after various torturous animal tests are performed in the company’s laboratories. It is complete cruelty to force animals, who have no voice to object with, into such excruciatingly painful situations for the sake of our foundation, lip gloss, nail polish, perfume, body lotion or various other cosmetic products. Most importantly, how can we as consumers allow cosmetic industries to continue the use of animal testing when numerous plausible alternatives exist? This is a question that has yet to be answered by the United States as a whole; however, my answer is clear: animal testing is completely unnecessary with the alternative testing methods available today.

Animal experimentation is a brutal procedure that is performed by scientists in certain laboratories throughout the United States. In this type of testing, harmful doses of chemical substances that are used to create cosmetic products are administered to live animals. This is done in order to test the safety of a product for human use. Even though animal testing has prevented various hazardous substances from being sold to the public, it is extremely damaging to the animals used in the process. “Every year, millions of animals suffer and die in painful tests to determine the ‘safety’ of cosmetics…” (People). Even though such surprising statistics are true, some industries, and even some scientists, still use such vicious forms of research. Professor Tipu Aziz, an Oxford neurosurgeon, happens to be one of these scientists who encourage the use of animal testing for cosmetic product research (Lewis). Professor Aziz argues his belief in the following words:

People talk about cosmetics being the ultimate evil. But beautifying oneself has been going on since we were cavemen. If it's proven to reduce suffering through animals tests, it's not wrong to use them. To say cosmetics are an absolute evil is absurd (qtd. in Lewis).

Professor Aziz is truthful in claiming that we have used cosmetics almost since the beginning of our human existence; however, he fails to explain that cosmetics only benefit our appearance and do not bring betterment to society, as it may if it were used to save human lives as in medical research. Therefore, the risking and taking of innocent animal lives solely for the benefit of our appearance is rather selfish considering that there is a lack of any worthwhile improvement to society.

One of the current animal testing methods is the Draize Eye Irritancy and Skin Test. This test places drops of a cosmetic product directly into the eye of a living animal, which is usually that of an albino rabbit (People). 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 to prevent movement of their heads so that scientists have access to their eyes and the rabbits are not given anesthesia (People). Therefore, these rabbits remain motionless for “an average of 72 hours” as they experience complete discomfort and lose their sense of sight (People). Are our precious cosmetic products really worth that much brutal treatment to animals? Even if the answer to this question is no, these and other types of tests are still used in laboratories today.

Another current animal testing method 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 50). 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 50). The average amount of time it takes for half of the group to die is about “two to four weeks” (People). As imaginable, those animals used in this type of test suffer various gruesome symptoms, such as “convulsions, labored breathing, diarrhea, constipation, emaciation, skin eruptions, abnormal posture, and bleeding from the eyes, nose, or mouth” (People). Unfortunately, the innocent creatures are left alone in excruciating pain to await their death.

Even though such merciless tests are still performed, there is a positive to this situation. Many cosmetic companies have converted their researching tactics to include the plausible and accurate alternatives instead of the torturous animal testing methods. When it comes to alternatives, one must understand “The Three R’s,” which are “replacement, reduction and refinement” (Howard 14). Replacement simply means to substitute other things for the animals in the tests (Howard 14). Additionally, reduction refers to a lessening in the number of animals required for a study, while refinement is the diminishing of the torture posed to animals (Howard 14). The Three R’s determine how alternative methods to animal testing were developed and how they are categorized.

One example of an alternative is the use of in vitro techniques, which is a type of replacement. 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 61). With this test, cosmetic 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 is known that if in vitro techniques are used more extensively that many animals’ lives will be saved in the future.

Additionally, computers can be used as an alternative to animal testing techniques. One procedure for this alternative is to create a computer simulation (Welsh 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 63). This could be helpful because it requires no tests and “predict[s] the probable biological response” as a real-life experiment would (Welsh 63). While conducting my research and reading about alternatives, I thought of another sensible alternative use from a computer. They could be used to create a database. One basic operation of a computer is to store information; therefore, computers can store information from past animal experiments and include specific data 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.

Also, if the alternatives alone are not satisfying enough of a reason to cease animal testing, there are much greater risks to the animals by continuing its use. “…some 50 percent of the 400-odd chemicals tested by the National Toxicology Program (NTP) have been found to cause cancer…in rodents” (Begley). In addition to this finding, it has also been determined that “it’s the megadose itself, not the inherent properties of the substance, that is carcinogenic,” which means that the amount of these chemicals that is administered to the rats is what causes the cancer (Begley). But what does this mean for humans? Well, the main reason that rodents are used so profusely in animal experimentation is because “short of experimenting on humans, they’re the best way to gauge potential hazards” (Begley). Therefore, because these rodents are proved to have acquired cancer from the megadoses of these specific chemicals, humans would be very likely to experience the same effects. Of course it is beneficial to know that these megadoses can cause cancer and that these substances should be avoided, but what about all of the rats that now have cancer as a result of that testing? For humans, when someone finds out that he or she has cancer it is a very emotional time because of the knowledge that there is still no cure for the disease. Animals and humans are both living creatures, so by continuing the testing of these harmful megadoses, the world is ignoring the suffering that these animals must endure. Many humans can attest to the struggles of having cancer, therefore, continuation of animal testing for cancerous megadoses on rats is the equivalent of animal cruelty because of the involuntary suffering that is brought upon them.

As demonstrated throughout this paper, animal testing is a method for determining the product safety of cosmetics by the use of violent and totally unnecessary research on animals. Consumers should not permit such cruelty to continue to take place. Furthermore, consumers should especially not be supportive of such horrific behavior by purchasing cosmetic products that are made available at the expense of innocent animals. We need to send animal experimenting companies a message by condemning their research practices and by supporting those companies who have modified their research to animal testing alternatives. Because of our advances in alternative research, no more animals should have to suffer in the future. Hopefully, this will be true when all cosmetic industries are required to switch to alternatives to animal testing.

Works Cited

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