

The future of medical research using animals

The Research Defence Society (RDS) in 1991 organized a conference, which was held on the premises of the Royal Society in London, and invited several of the good and the great in biomedical research to speak on the subject of animal experimentation. This conference is one of a number of attempts made over the last few years to explain to the informed and sometimes to the general public the role, value and problems of scientific research using animals. These 'explanations' have ranged from apologetic defences to proud boastings. The proceedings volume of the RDS conference should, perhaps, be described as an example of 'quiet pride in real achievement'. There are five main papers on the role of animal experimentation in the future of medicine, in fundamental studies, in the discovery of drugs and in neuroscience and cancer research. Only two short papers (5 pages in total) are devoted directly to the ethical implications of using animals; there are, however, a number of ethical points made in the main papers and in particularly in the most interesting thirteen pages of recorded discussion. The volume has a useful index.

Little mention seems to be made of the possible use of alternatives - this is somewhat surprising as many working biomedical scientists seem to feel that the use of so-called *refinement* alternatives could substantially reduce the suffering which we at times inflict on laboratory animals.

There is much useful and keenly presented information in this valuable collection of papers. The 98pp volume has been well produced in the Portland Press Proceedings series but is costed at £16.95. This somewhat high price may unfortunately act as a financial barrier to its wide deployment in the animal experimentation debate.

Animal Experimentation and the Future of Medical Research Proceedings of a conference organized by the Research Defence Society, held on 26 April 1991 at the Royal Society, London Edited by J H Botting (1992). Portland Press: London. 98pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, 59 Portland Place, London W1N 3AJ, UK or in North America from the publishers, PO Box 2191, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-2191, USA (ISBN 1 855 78 038 0; ISSN 0966 4068) Price £16.95, US\$30.

Student booklets on animal research

There has, up to now, been little in the way of sound informative literature on the employment of animals in biomedical research which could be recommended as an education resource for use in schools. This deficit has largely been overcome by the publication of two booklets: *The Search for Health* and *Animal Experiments*. The first of these has been put out by the Research for Health Charities Group and is a broad account of the role of research in developing modern treatments for human diseases. A serious attempt is made to explain, in as simple terms as possible, the underlying biology of disease processes and at relevant points in the explanations, the role of animal experimentation is discussed. There is little coverage of the control of animal usage.