

GSK Public policy positions

Use of Non-human Primates in the Discovery and Development of Medicines and Vaccines

The Issue

GSK's aim is to discover and develop medicines and vaccines that will prevent, treat and help alleviate the suffering caused by disease. Animal research forms a small but essential part of this discovery and development process.

Animals are needed to understand disease mechanisms, discover novel ways to treat disease, and evaluate the efficacy and safety of potential new medicines and vaccines before they are tested in clinical studies and approved for marketing.

For some diseases, the evaluation of potential new medicines can only be achieved in certain species of non-human primates (NHPs); such as macaques. Examples include HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's Disease and certain forms of viral hepatitis. NHPs may also be needed to evaluate how potential new medicines are absorbed, distributed, metabolised and excreted. Additionally they may be required for safety testing and quality testing of some vaccines.

GSK's Position

- All animal studies conducted by/for GSK, including those in NHPs must:
 - follow the 3Rs principles of replacement, reduction and refinement
 - be reviewed by an ethical review panel
 - minimise any pain or distress to animals
 - be performed by appropriately trained staff
- We will only carry out studies in NHPs (e.g. macaques), when they are essential to address efficacy or safety questions and if no lower order species is appropriate for the purposes of the programme.
- We will share our science in this area to promote science based decisions on NHP usage within the industry and regulatory community.
- The testing GSK conducts using NHPs is kept to an absolute minimum. Of the animal research that we carry out, less than 0.5% involves NHPs.
- GSK has voluntarily decided to end the use of great apes (i.e. chimpanzees) in research. We will no longer initiate or initiate funding of studies using great apes as part of our voluntary decision.
- NHPs used by GSK are specifically bred for research. GSK would only use wild caught primates under exceptional circumstances and only with specific authorisations by appropriate authorities.

Background

The Role of Non-human Primates in Medical Research

As part of our efforts to discover and develop new medicines, GSK may need information about the efficacy, metabolism and safety of potential medicines and vaccines from research in NHPs.

GSK's strong commitment to the 3Rs ensures that the lowest possible order (phylogenetically) of animal appropriate for research studies are used. NHPs are only used in research projects if no lower order species is appropriate for the purposes of the programme.

Examples where NHPs may be the most appropriate species for a research programme include where:

- the experimental medicine to be studied is active in vivo on receptors or enzymes that only occur in primates, both human and NHPs.
- the experimental medicine would be destroyed by the immune system of other species, but would be biologically active in both human and NHPs (e.g. monoclonal antibodies).
- the anatomy and/or physiology of a disease or pathway are uniquely similar in humans and NHPs, but sufficiently different in other species such that essential questions about clinical efficacy or safety requires testing in NHPs.
- the experimental medicine or vehicle used to administer the medicine is only tolerated in humans and NHPs, but not other animal species.
- the assessment for a disease process can only be studied in primates. Such testing includes the assessment of certain cognitive abilities and behaviours that are only exhibited in NHPs and humans.
- the pharmacokinetic characteristics are inadequate in other species to the extent that the preclinical assessment of human safety or establishing a safe starting human dose would be compromised without studies in NHPs; specifically macaque species.

Great Apes in Research

At the end of October 2008, GSK introduced a new policy that we would not initiate or initiate funding of studies using great apes. This was a voluntary decision and provides a tangible demonstration of our commitment to the 3Rs of animal research.

Great apes are gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and bonobos. The common chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) has been involved in biomedical research for over three decades. The other great apes – gorillas, orangutans and bonobos - have not been used in such research.

Chimpanzees have played a role in the understanding of many diseases that affect humans; specifically infectious diseases, such as hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS. While GSK recognises the importance of scientific knowledge tied to work with chimpanzees in the past, we also recognise that - in part thanks to new directions and advancement of animal models and other techniques in biomedical research - the case for using great apes in the future is less clear than it may have been previously.

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