

Loretta Waters

Monkey drug trials 1969

In 1969 a group of anonymous scientists carried out a drug trial using monkeys. The aim was to see if addiction could occur in non-human species. First the scientists administered several different drugs to individual monkeys at regular intervals. When the animals got use to taking the administered drugs, a self-injecting needle was placed into the wall of the enclosure and the monkeys were free to jab their own arms onto the needle, giving them the freedom to inject the substance whenever they wanted/needed to. The scientists were keen to see if the monkeys were left alone with access to administering the drug themselves, would they become addicted to the drugs and become monkey drug addicts. The drugs used were morphine, codeine, cocaine, amphetamines, alcohol, and caffeine. Immediately the effects of addiction started to show in the monkeys they were subjected to terrible suffering, some monkeys injecting every hour.

There are lots of ethical issues surrounding this experiment and it is something that you would not see being done in this day in age. The trial caused physical and mental harm to the monkeys sacrificing their health and wellbeing. The welfare of the animals was not respected, and the risk was far greater than any reward. As well as being an ethical concern there is also the question of whether the research was useful or even necessary.

- Animal research in the UK is now governed by the animals' act (scientific procedures 1968). Psychological research is guided by the BPS code of conduct. These must be always followed and adhered to. However, there is a critical point that concerns the problems with guidelines as it removes the need for the researcher to think for themselves about what they are doing, in terms of it being right or wrong. The researcher may feel no ethical responsibility because the guidelines are there for them, and by them following the code it is sufficient to ensure ethical behaviour. Having ethical guidelines, it can discourage ethical responsibility and independent ethical thinking. Animal ethics can be an overly complex subject.
- There are now 3 Rs that are a set of principles that scientists are encouraged to follow when undergoing any experiments on animals. They are in place to reduce the impact of research on the animals that are being experimented on.
- Reduction. To reduce the number of animals that are used in an experiment.
- Refinement. Refining the way that the animals are cared for and looked after, to reduce any suffering.
- Replacement. To replace any experiment on animals with any alternative techniques.

Loretta Waters

