

An Alliance for  
Evidence-Based  
Science



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## Properly Moderated Public Scientific Debate

12<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Dear Understanding Animal Research,

Thank you for your letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014 and again for your agreement to participate in properly moderated, public scientific debate. This proposed debate is now supported by 52 MPs who signed [Parliamentary EDM 263](#) last session and a growing number of MPs who have signed the newly tabled [EDM 22](#).

As it appears from your last missive that we are not communicating adequately, we will attempt in this letter to substantiate our concerns.

Your view that we do not cover the claimed 'use of research on one animal species to benefit another species' entirely ignores our website/campaign focus on trans-species extrapolation theory by Dr Greek, which is clearly covered in categories [one and two on our list of the nine main ways animals are used in science](#). It also needs to be clearly understood that from our side no one involved in these negotiations, nor Dr Greek, has ever stated or implied that 'all animal research is intended to be "predictive"', as your letter suggests.

We have gladly agreed to your suggestion to extend the debates to nine themes (or more if you wish); it is important to reiterate that these additional seven categories are agreed by both sides [as scientifically viable](#). We do not, therefore, find it acceptable to replace the first proposed debate on the [Question of the Predictive Value of Animal Models for Human Patients](#) - i.e. the 'use of research on one species to benefit another species' as you put it - with any other debate theme. Indeed, the prediction issue has indispensable implications for all the other debates. We further gladly leave the order of the subsequent debates to your discretion.

It should be added that your agreement to take part, pasted again below, was posted on the public twitter platform in response to our Cambridge march with MPs and Beagles, highlighting the specific debate called for by EDM 263 which solely concerns the prediction issue: our tweet linked to [this film](#).



For Life On Earth  
@forlifeonearth

[@ALAWAnimalLaw](#) Beagles & MPs march to demand [@animalevidence](#) agrees to properly moderated, public SCIENTIFIC debates [youtube.com/watch?v=OEXmjT...](#)

01:48 AM - 15 Oct 13





**UAR: Animal Research**  
@animalresearch

[@forlifeonearth](#) We have helped organise over 30 debates this week. If you organise another moderated debate we are willing to take part

10:43 AM - 15 Oct 13

The scientist who will argue the case for the proposition in this first proposed debate is Dr Ray Greek, president of [EFMA](#), Europeans for Medical Advancement. Please let us know the name of the scientist who will argue against the proposition.

On a separate but related note, you refer to 30 debates you organized last year for the benefit of students, however these deflected the spotlight away from scrutiny of scientific experts. It needs to be clearly recognized that these 'debate' events most regrettably muddled the issues of medical science with the morality of animal welfare. This is an all too common mistake and something our campaign aims to help rectify. Science can inform the discussion of ethics but ethics is not within the domain of science. Medical science concerns theory and factual evidence regarding the material universe. This is why our clear call for genuine scientific debates centers solely on the scientific and medical questions and facts which concern this issue. We hereby reiterate that we are laying aside all equally valid moral issues about animal welfare, for discussion at a separate time. Many of your 30 debate events presented unqualified students in debate with each other - there is of course nothing wrong with this in itself, but we cannot agree that this platform was one upon which each student could seriously 'make up their own mind on this complex issue' – again, this muddles as well as conflates topics. Scientific facts are never determined by anyone 'making up their own mind'! Further, in other 'debates' you pitched animal rights philosophers against scientists from the animal experimentation community. As far as the conclusions drawn concerned science, it was blatantly unfair to ask nonscientists to explain science. In the debate which did pitch two professionally qualified scientists against each other, both were from the animal experimentation community! Pro-animal experimentation scientist Prof. Colin Blakemore 'debated' with Dr Andrew Bennett, also an active [animal experimenter](#), director of the Alternatives lab at FRAME and a scientist who actively promotes animal models claimed as scientifically valid for applied, human medical research.

Concerning Mansfield QC, who has endorsed our debate conditions, you now say 'given that no reason is provided it is fair for us to question the objective capacity his claim is given in'. This further attempts to slur the ability of Michael Mansfield as QC, Britain's leading human rights defence barrister, to be objective. *Ad hominem* means 'to the man', that is, to his stated views or opinions (as opposed to his arguments). Our objection to your lack of respect for (and not merely questioning) professionalism therefore still stands.

Our twitter communication has already replied to your assertion that Jerry Vlasak sat on the EFMA board – this is [entirely false](#).

Finally, it may be noted that the subject for our proposed first debate is also highly topical, providing the Editor in Chief at the British Medical Journal with her Editors Choice last month [How predictive and productive is animal research?](#) It also is the focus of Bara and Joffe's current article [The methodological quality of animal research in critical care: the public face of science](#). (*Annals of Intensive Care*, 4, 26.)

For both sides to show that they are really serious and willing to be fair minded regarding this debate, and not making objections which are trivial and red herrings, the personnel needs to be agreed upon. Please submit your suggestions for both moderator and judges.

We look forward to organising this series of debates at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Groves, Alex Irving, Deborah Minns and Louise Owen.

Directors (respectively of) [Human Rights: Patient Group](#); [NO to Animal Experiments](#) (comprising the campaigns [Save the Harlan Beagles](#) and [Oppose B & K Universal](#)), and their flagship science-based campaign [For Life On Earth](#).