

Letter in support of primate research, [originally in The Guardian](#)

Nonhuman primates have long played a key role in life-changing medical advances. A recent white paper by nine scientific societies in the US produced a list of fifty medical advances from the last fifty years made possible through studies on nonhuman primates. These included: treatments for leprosy, HIV and Parkinson's; the MMR and hepatitis B vaccines; and earlier diagnosis and better treatment for polycystic ovary syndrome and breast cancer.

The biological similarities between humans and other primates mean that they are sometimes the only effective model for complex neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's. More than ten million people suffer from Parkinson's worldwide, and a recent study estimated that one in three people born in 2015 will develop dementia in their lifetime. Primate research offers treatments, and hope for future treatments, to patients and their families. Already over two hundred thousand Parkinson's patients have had their life dramatically improved thanks to Deep Brain Stimulation surgery, which reduces the tremors of sufferers. This treatment was developed from research carried out in a few hundred monkeys in the 1980-90s.

Given that primates are intelligent and sensitive animals, such research requires a higher level of ethical justification. The scientific community continues to work together to minimise the suffering of primates wherever possible. We welcome the worldwide effort to Replace, Refine and Reduce the use of primates in research.

We, the undersigned, believe that if we are to effectively combat the scourge of neurodegenerative and other crippling diseases, we will require the careful and considered use of nonhuman primates. Stringent regulations across the developed world exist to ensure that primates are only used where there is no other available model – be that the use of a mouse or a non-animal alternative and to protect the wellbeing of those animals still required. The use of primates is not undertaken lightly, however, while not all primate research results in a new treatment, it nonetheless plays a role in developing both the basic and applied knowledge that is crucial for medical advances.

Sir John Gurdon, DPhil, Professor at University of Cambridge, Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine 2012

Sir John E Walker, DPhil, Emeritus Director and Professor at MRC Mitochondrial Biology Unit, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry 1997

Alim Benabid, MD, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Biophysics at Joseph Fourier University, Joint Winner of the 2014 Lasker-DeBaakey Clinical Medical Research Award

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Kenneth Sher, PhD, President of the **Research Society on Alcoholism**

Hollis Cline, PhD, Professor, President of **Society for Neuroscience**

Wendy Jarrett, Chief Executive of **Understanding Animal Research**

Michael Arthur, Professor, President & Provost of **University College London**

American Psychological Association

American Society of Primatologists

Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology

Speaking of Research

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