

Dr. Capaldo's verbal testimony:

Committee on Chimpanzees in Biomedical and Behavioral Research

August 11, 2011 in Washington D.C.

My name is Dr. Theodora Capaldo. I am a psychologist and President of New England Anti-Vivisection Society. The crux of my testimony is that imposing a dichotomy between ethical and scientific arguments—as asked to do by NIH— is intellectually defensible...”

The Committee is likely aware of the negative impact stress in animals in labs has on research. Dr. Sapolsky put it this way: “the brain has a vast potential for sticking its nose into the immune system’s business”....

Studies have established that chimpanzees in research suffer from PTSD, depression and other psychological maladies. And routine and invasive procedures cause elevations of physiological stress indicators. Many caution against disregarding such effects.

Stress affects immune systems—crucial for the study of infectious diseases—and vital organs such as the liver—important for the metabolism of drugs—and renders the use of chimpanzees flawed science...even if assumed they may have value. My written testimony expands on this.

So, let me introduce Jeannie and Tom.

Jeannie was to be euthanized because her psychological collapse under the stress of lab life was so complete. After years of confinement and use, Jeannie was dissociative, self-mutilating, hyper-vigilant, prone to ritualistic behaviors, and unreachable.

Merck, Sharpe & Dohme sent Jean to the Buckshire Corporation who sent her to LEMSIP. Then in 1997, she was sent to sanctuary. Jeannie died in 2007 at the young age of 31. Her story is not atypical... Jeannie was a shamble of psychological symptoms, with all the contamination of data this implies, and a blueprint of the invasive research recorded in her body. Arguing her worth to research, except as a study of its casualties, would be indefensible.

Tom spent sixteen years at other labs before his 15 at LEMSIP. He was used for invasive research including HIV. At LEMSIP alone, he was knocked down 369 times. Finally, after some additional 56 punch liver biopsies, one open liver wedge biopsy, three lymph node and three bone marrow biopsies, Tom gave up.

In sanctuary, Tom continued to be plagued with problems like constant diarrhea—and at the start of every day — uncontrollable gagging. In both cases neither a cause nor treatment could be found.

In 2009, Tom died unexpectedly. His autopsy compels argument for the interface of science and ethics:

The trachea is thickened and scarred. The liver, spleen and multiple loops of bowel are adhered to the body wall....The [enlarged] liver is adhered to diaphragm... [And] the pancreas is ... atrophied, abnormal in colour and texture. The Kidneys: discoloured infarcted... Extensive fibrotic lesions... in the myocardium... associated with a significant loss of cardiac muscle... were most likely the cause of the death of Tom.

Diagnosable psychological maladies and autopsies reveal that laboratory confinement, use and associated stress take their toll on both chimpanzees and data.

To arrive at an informed decision that the ethical concerns surrounding chimpanzee use cannot be put aside – for scientific as well as ethical reasons. Including them will direct the better science that would follow.

