

Healthwatch

by Steven Bailey N.D.



Baby Fae, the innocent, is no more, yet the issues of medical ethics that her surgery brought to the forefront shall live for years to come. While the short term survival of Fae exhibited the tremendous ability of current chemotherapy to suppress organ rejection, the events surrounding the operation and cross-species experimentation have created a major national debate. Unique to this debate is the loud vocal dissent within the ranks of the allopathic medical community, the availability of the medical-research communities.

Ironically, amid this various debate, there has emerged a common irreverence for the opinions and actions of animal rights groups, as well as an avoidance of many broader issues related to the Baby Fae case. Front page articles in the *Oregonian* (Oct. 28, 84) have quoted authorities who referred to objections as "misconceptions" and based on "emotional rather than clearly rational" grounds. Mr. Rasberry, national columnist wrote "I have talked to them, and I have read their books on 'animal rights' (Nov. 2, 84 *Oregonian* p. C11). I also wondered if his readings extended beyond current texts such as *Animal Liberation*, and *Tools for Experimentation*, etc., and into the writings of Ghandi, Whitman, Thoreau, Christ and others whose reverence for life and nature extended beyond the myopic egotism prevalent in rapid technological growth.

The debate over Baby Fae's operation has questioned the blind determination and self-regulation by the Loma Linda researchers. It has also addressed the current ability to sustain longterm survival using organs from non-human primates. Many researchers and medical doctors have maintained that interspecies transplants can only be viewed as an experiment, and real benefits to Fae would be short term at best. While these issues are relevant, broader issues addressed by many groups include:

1—In the U.S. we spend over 10 percent of our GNP (over 350 million dollars) on medical costs each year. While we don't flinch at spending millions on artificial hearts and organ transplants, we permit poverty and poor pre-natal nutrition to contribute to the majority of birth defects within the U.S. While ignoring preventative social health programs, we individually rectify the problems of a few with a compassionate display of high tech medicine. With our current knowledge of pre-natal needs, the ill effects of industrial chemicals and environmental pollutants, and an ever-expanding volume of information on preventive and healthful habits, our excessive focus on drug therapies, surgical remedies, and end stage life maintenance may actually be contributing to a less optimal national health standard.

2—The use of animals in research, medicine, industry and defense is much greater than most people realize. Over 75 million animals are used each year in the U.S. with businesses breeding and selling laboratory animals like any other commercial product. Researchers are individuals, but as a whole their industry has shown a complete irreverence for the rights of animals.

"Speciesism" is the current term for the common devaluation of life related to the difference between humans and other species. Less than 200 years ago ethnic differences encountered similar opinions, and the use of "inferior" human stock for transplantation purposes may have been avoided solely by the technological restraints of the time. It was no more than 50 years ago that Dr. Drew, developer of plasma transfusion, died because a southern hospital refused to admit the Black doctor and provide the emergency transfusion for which he received the Nobel Prize in Medicine. Today I commonly see patients who, because of financial limitations, receive emergency care that is consistently less extensive than that provided to insured or financially responsible patients.

3—Animals will remain as tools for research for some time. What we, who speak out for our inarticulate friends, wish to do, is create change. There are innumerable cases of redundant experiments which give little or no new informa-

tion to science. The LD50 procedure which requires that 50% of a given population die by overdose to determine safe limits of the drug, has proven inaccurate in regards to oroflex, thalidomide, benedictine, acutane, etc., yet continues to be the industrial standard. This is in spite of human cell culture-alternatives that are accurate and economical. The Draize test, which results in causing severe pain and the blinding of thousands of rabbits yearly, can be replaced with similar tests using the nerve cells of chicken em-

bryos. We want less exploitation of animals and a more objective review process of animal experimentation. There is absolutely no reason to contend that science and human welfare will suffer with changes in experimental design and review, in fact the benefits of change should be substantial.

4—Self-regulation by the research community has proven itself ineffective. The continued defiance by the Joslin Diabetes Center Research Laboratory of Boston (to Depart-

ment of Agriculture citations of over a year ago regarding minimal confinement violations) exemplifies the problem. The recent local discovery of starvations and disease at the Knutson Kennels, which was reported to have supplied research facilities with stolen and dishonestly procured animals, reveals another problem with self-regulation. The practice of pound seizure and the use of domestic dogs and cats in research is a major issue which needs dramatic improvement.

there are many other focal issues within the animal rights movement which need further exposure. The discussion over the Baby Fae case will survive for decades, however there is no reason for the continued dichotomy between animal advocates and scientific progress, as they may well find mutual harmony in an enlightened future.

*Society for the protection of the unborn through nutrition (SPUN).



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