

Opinion



Board Editorials

Be Nice to Mice

Animal testing is vital to medical research, and the University must stringently follow treatment guidelines

Scientific research, particularly related to health, is not all about formulas and equations. New medicines and theories must be tried out. Oftentimes, laboratory animals such as rats and birds are the casualties of progress in the field of human health research.

If there were no animals to test new drugs on, then many of the drugs and methods that save human lives today would be nonexistent. Because these animals are vital to research and enable medical breakthroughs, they deserve to be treated in the most humane way possible.

Unfortunately, it appears that some University researchers and assistants do not see the value in following humane procedures when it comes to dealing with laboratory animals.

A hidden-camera video released last week by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals showed that rats and mice used for research in the University's Thurston Bowles Building labs were being treated in

any way but humane.

The film's footage revealed dirty, crowded cages, sick animals going without treatment for weeks and animals being improperly euthanized, including some mice being decapitated with scissors without anesthesia.

While PETA has an obvious agenda, the videotape does not lie. It is clear that some practices in the video violate rules prescribed by the University's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and the National Institutes of Health's policies in regard to research animals.

Fortunately, the University has done the proper thing by launching an investigation looking into the allegations of abuse and neglect leveled by PETA.

Other government agencies are also looking into launching their own investigations. This University has a long history of reliable, groundbreaking medical research. It would be a shame if this tradition of excellence was tarnished by the actions of a few researchers.

If the University's investigation deems that particular individuals were at fault in the neglect and abuse of the lab animals, then they must be punished.

The University and the federal government have regulations concerning animal welfare for a reason. These regulations are constructed and must be followed to create a happy medium between research and animal rights groups such as PETA.

A new amendment proposed by Sen. Jesse Helms to this year's federal farm bill would permanently exclude laboratory rats, mice and birds from U.S. Department of Agriculture oversight under the Animal Welfare Act. But, any expansion of the act would be too costly. Guidelines as to how animals are treated in labs are already in place, they just need to be followed.

It's a shame that it took a PETA investigation to call attention to this problem, but the rules must be followed to make sure that no animals unduly suffer from an individual's carelessness.

Computenik? Japan, You're Kidding Right?

As of last week, the world's fastest computer resides in a Japanese laboratory. While normal people are wondering when exactly this Japanese supercomputer will be sprouting slimy tentacles and eating Tokyo, others are suggesting that we are witnessing the next "Sputnik."

"In some sense we have a Computenik on our hands," said Jack Dongarra, a University of Tennessee computer scientist, in *The New York Times*. The intrepid *Times* interviewer undoubtedly responded, "Excuse me?" Blank stares ensued.

And Dr. Dongarra, what "sense" is that, exactly? Back in 1957, Sputnik made its way around the earth, singing its shrill song of beeps and informing the world that nuclear armageddon was more than just the stuff of sci-fi novels. Sputnik forced the U.S. to rethink international policy, military strategy and domestic expenditures. And Sputnik was a threat, of terrible proportions, clear and simple.

In contrast, this yet-unnamed Japanese supercomputer (let's call it "Son of Godzilla") is made to "analyze climate change, including global warming, as well as weather and earthquake patterns." The only people who will be forced to rethink anything are local news meteorologists, whose primary concerns include thinking up 15 different ways of saying "it's gonna rain." Let's be honest - Son of Godzilla is no Sputnik.

In fact, Son of Godzilla isn't much of a threat at all - it will study the weather, which is a fairly harmless pursuit, the last time I checked. So why the panic? "These guys are blowing us out of the water, and we need to sit up and take notice," exclaims Thomas Sterling, a supercomputer designer and dispenser of hyperbole from sunny California. Calm yourself, Dr. Sterling.

The fear potentially stems from the fact that American supercomputers are primarily used for military research and simulating weapons. A *New York Times* article ominously comments, "For now, (Son of Godzilla) will be used only for climate research," leaving the door open in the reader's mind for wild speculation as to the eventual purpose of Son of Godzilla - the hallmark of any good piece of sensationalist journalism.

Truth be told, for all this hype, there are those who don't expect Son of Godzilla to make much of an impact at all. "It's potentially quite significant for climate studies," said Dr. Tim Kalleen, director of the American climate research center. *What?* Obviously, the Japanese aren't hiring the right kind of PR guys because Dr. Kalleen is apparently under the erroneous impression that Son of Godzilla is in fact a rusty weather vane sitting on a unused barn somewhere in South Dakota.

People of Japan: if you're going to spend millions of dollars building a supercomputer specifically for the purpose of studying the weather, then it had better be *damn, cold-cookin' perfect* for the job! And if it isn't, then you'd better convince people that it is! Maybe Dr. Kalleen is just trying to be funny.

The apparent confusion with Son of Godzilla doesn't end there. The Japanese government spent "\$350 million to \$400 million" developing the system. Meanwhile, Japanese taxpayers are scratching their heads, wondering why their government refuses to employ somebody who can count. Does the government really not know how much it spent?

One of my friends kindly pointed out that the government might have been unwilling to disclose the exact figure to the public. While this is possible, the only reason for non-disclosure I could think of was that the government is too embarrassed about the millions of dollars on only a "potentially quite significant" machine. You know, it's kind of like buying a used car and finding out in your driveway that you only got three wheels and half an engine. How embarrassing!

Whether or not Son of Godzilla is an embarrassment or not, many feel that the Japanese are to be envied for the accomplishment. "The Japanese clearly have a level of will that (Americans) haven't achieved," proclaims Dr. Sterling. One of our nation's brightest is most likely mistaking Son of Godzilla for the end of poverty, war and disease.

While scientific research is important in its own regard, let's not lose perspective here. As Son of Godzilla begins its tenure as the smartest weatherman alive, the U.S. government is dishing out millions of tax dollars to American researchers designing even faster computers. On one hand, there is science for science's sake, but I doubt the 34 million tax-paying Americans - including one million North Carolinians - living below the poverty line would agree. In fact, I'm sure they wouldn't. And neither should you.

Eugene's last CHiPs show is 8 pm Saturday in 100 Hamilton Hall. Bring this column for \$1 off. Eugene's request: Bring a makeshift birthday card to the show for my 27th birthday and get \$1 off. E-mail me at chinook@email.unc.edu.



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A Verdict to Stand By

Gov. Easley rightly denied clemency to a death row inmate; his request to transfer to a hospice was unjustified

It is the most severe punishment in the U.S. justice system, exacted upon those who have committed the most egregious offenses: the death penalty.

Capital punishment is intended to serve as a means of deterrence and way of delivering justice to the families of the victims, requiring that sentencing be swiftly and uniformly applied.

Last Wednesday, Gov. Mike Easley rightly rejected a request from a terminally ill death row inmate who hoped that under a new law he could be transferred to a hospice and spend his last days with family.

Lemons, 34, received two death sentences for the 1994 murders of Bobby Gene Stroud, 38, and Margaret Daniels Strickland, 34, both of Goldsboro. He also received an additional 160 years in prison for two counts of first-degree kidnapping and two counts of robbery with a firearm.

A new law, passed in September 2001, allows inmates to be released to hospice

care if they no longer pose a threat to society, have an incurable disease and are expected to die within a year. The law also requires input from victims or their family members before a decision is reached.

Lemons was HIV-positive, suffered from cirrhosis, hemophilia, hepatitis C and possibly liver cancer. He died early Monday, three days before his scheduled execution.

Regardless, sparing him because of physical maladies that were the result of destructive habits is not justified in light of the horrible crimes he committed and the input from the victims' families. They all expressed their desire for Lemons to remain in jail, viewing his release as a potential threat to the community.

In light of this, Lemons' case didn't deserve special treatment. Easley was right to recognize that sending terminally ill first-degree murderers to a hospice would unfairly reduce their sentences and diminish the justice delivered to the victims and their families.

Furthermore, the costs of sending Lemons to hospice care would've fallen on the N.C. Department of Corrections, which has been earmarked for major budget cuts to relieve state's mounting deficit.

Lemons' lawyers argued that hospice would allow his family members, who live in Detroit, to visit him more frequently to give their final farewells. But in prison, he did receive medical care and was allowed visits from friends and family. Granting hospice care was unneeded.

Had Easley allowed Lemons to enter hospice, he would have set a precedent founded on a slippery slope. The doors would be open for future offenders and their lawyers to effectively diminish capital punishment sentencing, and the role of the death penalty as a deterrent would be undermined.

The system of justice is by no means perfect, but Easley's decision to keep Lemons in jail was necessary to ensure that the death penalty continues to serve its purposes.

April Campaign Focuses on Preventing Sexual Assault

Throughout April, the Orange County Rape Crisis Center participates in Sexual Assault Awareness Month. We hand out teal ribbons to wear in support of survivors of sexual violence, and we display T-shirts made by survivors and those close to them through the Clothesline Project. These activities, we hope, help to empower survivors of sexual violence to speak out and to seek assistance in ways that help with their healing journey.

In addition, community awareness has been focused on sexual violence through both local and national events. Reports of sexual assaults on campus and within the community, continuing coverage of improper handling of child sexual abuse within religious communities and reports that women and men cannot feel safe in their own neighborhoods scream out at us through the headlines and the evening news.

Our work at the rape crisis center highlights a number of things that we want to share with the campus community:

1. Although the assaults that we hear about most are assaults committed by strangers, it is most often friends, family members, partners, dates or some other

acquaintance who assault women and men, girls and boys. We do not point this out to minimize or discount the experiences of those of us who are assaulted by a stranger.

**MARGARET BARRETT
AND MATT EZZELL**
GUEST COLUMNISTS

However, when thinking about promoting our safety and challenging the rape culture we must have accurate information at our disposal.

2. The fear of sexual violence restricts opportunities for women, both on campus and in the larger community. It is no surprise to us that The Daily Tar Heel found that more women than men were scared to be out alone at night. Sexual violence disproportionately targets women in our culture. The threat, or fear, of sexual violence alone restricts the freedom of movement and expression of women.

Indeed, one of the most common responses we hear following assaults is that women should restrict their lives in very real ways - where they walk, with whom they walk, when they walk, when they study, how they dress...

3. The person who is assaulted is not responsible for the assault, no matter what happened. There is no exception to this rule. Assaults are always the responsibility of the person who attacks another person -

not the responsibility of the person who is victimized. It doesn't matter what the circumstances are; poor judgment is not a crime.

4. While disproportionate numbers of women experience sexual violence, men also are affected by it. Not only have many men and boys been sexually abused, men also suffer as the secondary survivors of their mothers, sisters, daughters and women partners and friends who are assaulted. We all have a stake in challenging the rape culture.

What can you do on an individual level to combat the problem of sexual violence?

1. Become known as someone who is open to listening and believing when a survivor comes forward. Often we think a survivor needs to talk to someone. What she or he may need most is just someone to listen.

2. Know the limits of what you are able to offer a survivor, and make sure you know how to refer her or him so they can get the assistance they need. Educate yourself as to the resources in your community, school and life.

3. Make sure that your own institutions (organizations, workplaces, communities of faith) have a process in place for handling reports of sexual violence when they occur.

If someone came forward to you, would you know what to do?

4. Challenge sexism when you see it in your life (in comments, jokes, movies, actions, etc.). Speak out. Volunteer.

5. If you are a survivor, understand that the assault was not your fault and that you have a right to seek out support and resources in whatever ways you feel comfortable. There is no script or time frame for your healing.

Too often, we turn a blind eye to sexual violence in community, or we excuse it away by victim blaming or thinking that it is something that happens to "those types of people." Sexual violence affects every one of us. Our community is crying for help, and it is past time that we all stood up and acted for change. A different world is possible.

The Orange County Rape Crisis Center is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ending sexual violence. Any individual who has been touched by these issues in any way, directly or indirectly, is encouraged to call the center's toll-free crisis/response line: 1-866-We Listen (935-4785).

Margaret Barrett is the executive director and Matt Ezzell is the coordinator of community education at the Orange County Rape Crisis Center.



The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Publication is not guaranteed. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union, mail them to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, NC 27515 or e-mail forum to: editdesk@unc.edu.

Editor's Note

Time is running out to apply for the fall 2002 editorial page staff.

The DTH editorial page staff is composed of the DTH editor, the editorial page editor, the assistant editorial page editor, eight board members, five columnists and five or six cartoonists.

The editorial board is responsible for writing unsigned board editorials and endorsements for local, state and student government elections.

Columnists write one column each week.

Columns should be timely, newsworthy and relevant to the DTH's readers.

Cartoonists are responsible for one editorial cartoon a week. Previous journalism experience is not required for any position, but members of student government are ineligible to join the editorial page staff.

Applications can be picked up at the front desk of The Daily Tar Heel in Suite 104 of the Student Union. They are due by 5 p.m. April 25.

Questions? Please contact Editorial Page Editor-select Lucas Fenske at fenske@email.unc.edu.