

Working with animal protectionists

AFMA is frequently called upon by people in the animal protection community to speak at events and debates, discuss scientific papers, and comment on related issues. We are happy to participate in these events, but before we do the interested party should understand what AFMA is and what we do. This essay is meant to inform such individuals what AFMA is available to do and how we prefer to participate in such interactions.

First, animal protectionists need to understand that AFMA is *not* an animal protectionist group. AFMA does not oppose the use of animals in science nor do we oppose eating animals or other actions that animal protectionists oppose. Our policy is not to comment on, endorse, or condemn activities outside our very narrow focus of using animals as predictive models for humans. For example, we acknowledge that animals can be used for dissection in high school biology classes. This is a *scientifically* tenable use of animals and it is on science that we focus. AFMA knows there are alternatives to using animals like frogs in dissection but as we do not promote dissection or alternatives we rarely comment on the practice. Similarly, we realize abortion is a contentious issue in society and some aspects do overlap with science. But as abortion is outside our very narrow focus, we do not engage in that controversy either. We are not all things to all people.

One reason AFMA is respected as a credible authority on animal models is precisely because we do not take sides in the ethics debate. We neither condemn nor condone but rather referee which practices are scientifically tenable e.g., dissection, and which are not e.g., using animals as predictive models for drug and disease response. Therefore, if you want to hold an event where every speaker thinks exactly like you and opposes all uses of animals unconditionally, you might not appreciate our presence.

Second, AFMA has serious reservations about groups like PETA and HSUS. Such groups more often than not simply have the science wrong, hence do more harm than good. If you want us to speak at an event where they will also be speaking, please keep this in mind. It is our position that groups like HSUS are actually complicit with the animal model industry in maintaining the *status quo*. (For more on this, see essay title [How animal protection groups are delaying the end of vivisection.](#)) It is also our observation that that pointing out the cruelty of vivisection has a two hundred year track record of failure. (For more on this, see essay title [What is needed in order to end vivisection?](#)) The naïve attitude advocated by PETA impacts AFMA as we compete with PETA in fundraising. If society wrongly believes all that is needed to end vivisection is for more people to understand how cruel it is, then they will see no reason to fund AFMA. While AFMA is not trying to end vivisection *per se* we are trying to end those aspects of it that clearly do not work. Therefore it is our position that if you want to see vivisection ended the best thing you can do is provide support to AFMA as our methods will allow you to obtain your goal faster than supporting groups like PETA.

Third, AFMA engages in debate only when [specific rules](#) are followed. Further, we insist on debating the issue of the predictive ability of animal models. There are two reasons for this. 1. The reason vivisection persists is because it is sold to the public as making drugs safe and finding cures for diseases; in other words as being predictive for

humans. In fact, animal models cannot predict human response so this essentially falsifies the scientific underpinnings of the main argument for vivisection. 2. Regardless of what the debate topic is, vivisectionists will want to discuss the use of animals in basic science, as basic research does not profess predictability. We are happy to debate this topic but insist on debating prediction first as eventually the vivisectionists will want to justify basic research as predictive research and we are then back to prediction. Their arguments for using animals in basic research are weak hence they try to prop up their position by eventually claiming predictability. Therefore, regardless of what aspects of vivisection you want to see debated, it will revolve around prediction. Prediction is the first issue to resolve and no other issue can be resolved until it is.

AFMA is happy to debate the use of animals in basic research after the issue of prediction has been resolved. This can happen in two ways. The first debate can be on prediction with a second on basic research or the vivisectionists can stipulate that animal models are not predictive and we can proceed to debate the use of animals in basic science. Either way is acceptable to us but the vivisectionists will not choose to admit animals are not predictive for humans.

Fourth, AFMA challenges the *paradigm* of using animals to predict human response. Based on our scientific education, expertise, and experience we think the way to educate society as to why specific animal models are not predictive is to show that the paradigm as a whole is untenable. We do this by examining evolutionary biology, genomics, empirical evidence and other recent advances in science. Let us be very clear what this does *not* entail.

Analyzing individual vivisection protocols and pointing out their flaws has never been and will never be useful in ending vivisection. There are simply too many excuses the vivisectionists can make to excuse whatever flaws are found in any individual experiment or protocol and without profound efforts by the animal protectionist, it will be next to impossible to counter all the excuses. For example:

- Granted, this research has problems but this is an exception, most protocols are solid.
- This is an old protocol and the flaws have been corrected.
- Sometimes great discoveries come from what appears at the time to be trivial research.
- You do not understand the protocol.
- The protocol was studied and approved by the Animal Care and Use Committee and the scientists at the university.
- This research may result in a cure for childhood cancer. The so-called flaws are irrelevant.

The above excuses are just that, excuses, however arguing about them with people who do not want to understand or admit the truth is unproductive. Informing society about individual protocols has been attempted many times in the past and always to no avail in part because it is difficult for the animal advocate to address all the above excuses.

If animal advocates want to understand why individual protocols are not going to be predictive, they would be better off reading [Drs Shanks and Greek's books](#). The animal advocate can then educate her associates and others she encounters. If such activity results in someone from the vivisection community offering to publicly discuss the topic

further, we recommend that she [contact us](#) and allow us to represent her in that public discussion/debate.

There is no reason to exhaustively critique one protocol when we have already falsified the paradigm as a whole. The US Patent Office does not consider patents for perpetual motion machines (PMMs) because the 2nd law of thermodynamics proves PMMs cannot exist. Therefore, there is no sense in analyzing patents claiming to make one. There are differences between biology and physics but the relevant point is that if the general principles of biology negate the possibility of using animal models to predict human response to drugs and diseases, there is likewise no need to consider protocols that claim they will.

Analyzing vivisection protocols and pointing out violations of the Animal Welfare Act will not end vivisection for essentially all of the same reasons in addition to others. As we have pointed out, society will not end vivisection while still thinking it will postpone their demise. (For more on this, see essay title [*What is needed in order to end vivisection?*](#))

AFMA is very willing to lecture and participate in events hosted by animal protectionists. We hope the above has been informative.