

Voluntary Decision to End the Use of Great Apes in Research

The Issue

The great apes family comprises gorillas, chimpanzees, orangutans and bonobos. One species of ape; *Pan troglodytes* – the “common chimpanzee” – has been involved in biomedical research for over three decades. The other great apes are not used in biomedical research and there is no suggestion that they should be.

GSK only does animal research where absolutely scientifically necessary. Where we do use animals, we are guided by the principles of the 3Rs (replacement, refinement, reduction) and, of course, to minimising pain and distress. A key part of our commitment to the 3Rs is to ensure that the lowest possible order of animal is used in research. Next to humans, great apes are the highest-order of animals.

GSK recognises the importance of scientific knowledge tied to work with chimpanzees in the past, we also recognise that - in part thanks to new directions and advancement of animal models and other techniques in biomedical research - the case for using great apes in the future is less clear than it may have been in the past. Accordingly, GSK has decided not to initiate or initiate funding of studies using great apes after 28 October 2008.

This is a tangible demonstration of GSK's strong commitment to the 3Rs.

Background

Animal research and testing is an essential component of understanding disease and evaluating the effectiveness and safety of new vaccines and medicines. Safety regulations require us to test all new medicines on animals before they are tested in clinical trials using humans. The vast majority of animals (around 93%) used by GlaxoSmithKline are rodents.

Ultimately GSK would like to be able to develop and bring new medicines to market without the need for using animals in research. However, we do not believe this can be achieved in the foreseeable future. GSK is fully committed to the 3Rs – replacement refinement and reduction of animals in research – and to achieving the highest possible standards of animal welfare.

Chimpanzees have historically played a role in the understanding of some diseases, for example infectious diseases, such as Hepatitis C and HIV/AIDS.