

"Experimenting with Humans and Animals: From Galen to Animal Rights"

Anita Guerrini, 2003, 165 pages, The Johns Hopkins University Press, \$18.95

Review by Norman M. Goldfarb

"Experimenting with Humans and Animals: From Galen to Animal Rights" provides a fascinating tour through the history of animal experimentation, with reference to human experimentation for perspective. Even more interesting than the science is what the experimentation reveals about our views of animals and ourselves. These views will influence the course of human subjects protections in clinical research.

While scientists have employed animals in physiological and other experiments for millennia, twentieth-century medical research and safety testing have expanded their use many fold. Over a million primates were sacrificed to develop the Salk and Sabin polio vaccines. American scientists and product testers currently use about 40 million mice per year.

The search for knowledge has required experiments with both animals and humans. While experiments with humans have always been controversial, attitudes towards animals have changed substantially. To illustrate, a story is told of St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), who chastised a colleague for cutting off the foot of a living pig to feed a sick friar, not because of cruelty to the animal, but because the pig belonged to someone else. Given current research on animal intelligence, it is likely that the legal lines between humans and animals (such as chimpanzees) may continue to blur.

Until recent centuries, it was generally believed that animals did not have the capacity to feel pain. While this view, contrary to all the evidence, may seem incomprehensible today, anesthesia during circumcision is still uncommon. Where does that place human (male) newborns on the evolutionary chart?

The book includes eight chapters:

- Introduction
- Bodies of Evidence: Experimentation and Philosophical Debate in Premodern Europe
- Animals, Machines, and Morals
- Disrupting God's Plan
- Cruelty and Kindness
- The Microbe Hunters
- Polio and Primates
- Conclusion: Human Rights, Animal Rights, and the Conduct of Science

The book is available at bookstores.

Reviewer

Norman M. Goldfarb is Managing Director of First Clinical Research LLC, a provider of clinical research best practices information, consulting and training services. Contact him at 1.650.465.0119 or ngoldfarb@firstclinical.com.