

For immediate release

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Animal group condemns cruel and unnecessary pain research for 'health tea drink'

The **BUAV**, the UK's leading organisation campaigning to end animal experiments, has today criticised **Newcastle University** for allowing extremely cruel experiments to be carried out on mice. This follows the University's announcement of research into the pain-killing benefits of Brazilian mint (*Hyptis crenata*), claiming that a 'tea' made from the plant was as effective at providing pain relief as the common pain-killing drug Indometacin ¹.

Yet, in spite of robust evidence from patients in Brazil where it has long been prescribed for pain relief, and the existence of many investigative methods involving humans that could have been used to research its effects further, the researchers inflicted extremely cruel and scientifically questionable procedures on mice to 'confirm' the analgesic effects of the mint. The tests used included the 'Plantar test (Hargreaves method)' in which the hind paws of mice are exposed to heat to induce pain, and also the 'Acetic acid writhing test' in which acid is injected into the abdomens of mice to induce pain so severe that the animals 'contort' ^{2,3}. The frequency of these contortions is used as a measurement of the degree of pain being experienced.

The cruelty of these experiments is self-evident, but furthermore the scientific validity and human relevance of such research is highly dubious. An expert workshop on pain research in 2008 concluded that, 'Using animals to research pain has "limited value" and should be replaced by newer technologies,' based on a detailed report that asserted, 'Animal tests...are too simplistic' ⁴. It cited the more humane and human-specific research methods available, including neuroimaging and electrophysiological investigations, many of which have been specifically to explore the effects of proposed new analgesics.

These techniques are widely used and known to be powerful and effective ^{5,6}, and are pivotal to cutting edge research taking place in pain research at Aston University in the UK, for example ⁷⁻⁹.

BUAV's Scientific Co-ordinator, Dr Katy Taylor states: "The BUAV is very concerned that such cruel and outdated research continues to be approved by university ethics committees and the Home Office, when alternative scientific methods are clearly available."

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NOTES:

[1] BBC News. Cup of mint tea 'can kill pain'. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/health/8373791.stm> (Accessed 25-11-2009).

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- [5] Raichle, M. E. 2003. Functional brain imaging and human brain function. *J Neurosci*. 23, 10, 3959-3962.
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