



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

**Response to EDM 373 – Animal Testing**

Thank you for contacting me about the use of animals to predict human responses.

In my role as a Minister, I am unable to sign Early Day Motions as doing so is likely to breach the Ministerial Code's rule on collective responsibility.

I am pleased that the Government has outlined how it will work to reduce, replace and refine the use of animals in research - known as 'the 3Rs'. The UK's National Centre for the 3Rs has been leading the way in this area, and has already invested over £35 million to support this work. As a result, trials into cancer, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, as well as toxicity testing, have all seen reductions in animal use.

Animal research still plays a small but important role in providing vital safety information for potential new medicines. It is worth remembering that, as a result of findings from animal studies, a large number of potential new drugs never get as far as being tested in humans. Some aspects of the toxicological assessment of new medicines cannot be adequately assessed in humans, and animal data will be the only kind available.

The Predictive Toxicology project was carried out by a consortium of pharmaceutical companies, enterprises, and universities to characterise the effects of 16 test compounds using conventional toxicological parameters and newer approaches. A study published in May 2013 examined over 1200 adverse drug reactions with an incidence rate of over 5 per cent from almost 150 new medicines. The analysis showed that almost half of these were entirely predictable from animal data.

Without animal testing it is highly likely that a large number of potentially dangerous new medicines would be tested in healthy volunteers and patients in clinical trials, and Ministers believe that this would be quite unacceptable. However, animals are only used when there are no suitable alternatives, and by encouraging new cutting-edge approaches to science we will ensure that standards of animal welfare are improved.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

*Edward Timpson*

**Edward Timpson MP**

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