

Taking animals out of laboratory research

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Pioneering work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research — and ultimately remove them from laboratories altogether — has received a major boost at The University of Nottingham.

A laboratory devoted to finding effective alternatives to animal testing has been expanded and completely remodelled in a £240,000 overhaul designed to hasten the development of effective non-animal techniques.

Scientists hope that by developing the use of cell and tissue cultures, computer modelling, cell and molecular biology, epidemiology and other methods, they will one day be able to completely remove animals from medical research — while still maintaining crucial work to defeat diseases that affect millions of people.

The new FRAME Alternatives Laboratory, within the University's Medical School, is to be officially opened by Ed Balls MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, on July 6.

FRAME – Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments — has had its laboratory at the University for 25 years, making Nottingham unique as the location of the charity's only research facility. The lab is run as a FRAME/University collaboration.

FRAME advocates the use of alternative methods to animal testing, through the use of the 'Three Rs' — refinement, reduction and replacement. Refinement of procedures so that the suffering of any animals necessarily used is minimised, reduction of the number of

animals used to an unavoidable minimum, and ultimately replacement of animals altogether with validated alternative methods such as cell cultures and computer modelling.

The charity is seeking reliable, scientifically proven ways forward which take account of the welfare of both humans and animals, without jeopardising the ground-breaking work on the major healthcare challenges of the 21st century taking place at research centres around the world.

The official opening of the new FRAME Alternatives Laboratory will be performed by Ed Balls MP at 11.30am on Friday, July 6. The event will also be attended by members of both FRAME and The University of Nottingham, who will be the guests of Professor Don Grierson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and for the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Professor Terry Bennett, Head of the School of Biomedical Sciences, which houses the FRAME Alternatives Laboratory, said: “The close association between FRAME and the School of Biomedical Sciences in The University of Nottingham is clear evidence of the willingness of all concerned to take seriously the need for careful scrutiny of the use of animals in medical experiments, and the rigorous application of the principle of the ‘Three Rs’.”

Among the invited guests will be Brough Girling, husband of the late Julia Girling, who raised more than £12,000 for FRAME during her life and left a £100,000 legacy to the charity when she died last year. Their daughter Sarah will also attend. This legacy forms part of FRAME’s contribution to the remodelled laboratory. The overall cost of expanding and refurbishing the Laboratory has been shared equally between FRAME and the University.

Dr Nick Palmer, MP for Broxtowe and member of the FRAME all-party parliamentary group, will also attend the opening event.

Professor Michael Balls, Chairman of the Trustees of FRAME, said: “FRAME's decision to move from London to Nottingham in 1981, and to establish a research programme in collaboration with the University, was a master stroke, which greatly enhanced the standing of the Charity.

“The FRAME Alternatives Laboratory has deservedly earned an international reputation for its contributions to the development and validation of non-animal procedures to replace animal tests on chemicals and products of various kinds. The new facility will enable our work to reach out in new directions, so that we will be able to maintain our position at the forefront of research on alternatives to animal experimentation.”

Dr Andy Bennett, Director of the FRAME Alternatives Laboratory, said: “The new FRAME laboratories will provide a wonderful facility that will take our research into human cell culture-based alternatives forward.

“The positioning of the laboratory in the Medical School is highly beneficial and will allow us to further strengthen research links with clinicians and basic scientists at the University and the Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust.”

FRAME recognises that immediate abolition of all animal experiments is not possible, because vital medical research must continue to find treatments for diseases which lessen the quality of human and animal life. New consumer products, medicines, and industrial and agricultural chemicals must be adequately tested in order to identify potential hazards to human and animal health, and to the environment.

Source: University of Nottingham

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