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Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology

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Public Comment for the Public Workshop of the Committee on the Use of Chimpanzees in Biomedical and Behavioral Research

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) is composed of 24 scientific societies with more than 100,000 members, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. Our community would like to thank the Institute of Medicine for the opportunity to comment on what makes the chimpanzee scientifically valuable for biomedical research.

FASEB strongly supports the responsible use of animals in research, including the use of chimpanzees, when scientifically appropriate and justified. Research involving chimpanzees has been, and continues to be, important for biomedical and behavioral research that advances the public's health. Chimpanzees are an invaluable resource as they are the only animals susceptible to many diseases that afflict humans and share many of the same physiological characteristics as humans.

The validity of the use of chimpanzees in biomedical research is a scientific question based on genetic and physiological similarity.

The rationale for using the chimpanzee in any given experiment is based on a number of factors. We feel that chimpanzees should continue to be available for biomedical research in the following instances:

1. if the chimpanzee is an appropriate and valid model to study the pathogenesis of a particular disease or virus;
2. if the chimpanzee is an appropriate and valid model to evaluate antiviral and/or vaccine safety and efficacy;
3. for pre-clinical testing and development of monoclonal antibodies since chimpanzee cell receptors and cytokine profiles are virtually identical to those of the human immune system;
4. if the research benefits the wild chimpanzee and great ape population. As we've heard, recent research on laboratory chimpanzees has led to the development and application of vaccines for the wild ape population against the deadly Ebola virus. And finally,
5. in the event of an unforeseen public health crisis due to bioterrorism or natural causes. In this case, the public might need access to a research population of chimpanzees in order to study disease progression and develop and test prophylactic and therapeutic strategies against these threats.

These are compelling needs going forward, and the availability of chimpanzees will be critical.

Of course any research on chimpanzees, as with all animals, should be conducted within the strict ethical, legal, and safety framework of current regulations.

FASEB thanks you for this opportunity to comment.

FASEB is composed of 24 societies with more than 100,000 members, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. FASEB enhances the ability of scientists and engineers to improve—through their research—the health, well-being and productivity of all people. Our mission is to advance health and welfare by promoting progress and education in biological and biomedical sciences through service to our member societies and collaborative advocacy.