

Perspectives on medical research

The Medical Research Modernization Committee is a group of United States health care professionals 'who lend their training, experience, and expertise to evaluate the medical and/or scientific merit of research modalities in order to identify archaic methods and to promote sensible, reliable, and efficient methods of research.' Since 1989 this group has published an occasional series of collected essays and reviews on various aspects of biomedical research. The general approach is critical of the use of animal models of human disease. Their argument is that most advances in our understanding of disease processes have come about through clinical investigation and not animal experimentation.

There have, of course, always been claims that it is unscientific and unsafe to apply results from animal research to the human situation. These claims have in the past largely been made by non-scientists. *Perspectives on Medical Research*, however, is written by established, professional scientists and their essays have to be taken seriously. This is not to say that they are always going to be right, but their arguments cannot be summarily dismissed – they need to be answered.

The present volume contains essays on, amongst other things, sickle-cell anaemia; the failure of animal models of cystic fibrosis; a new method of skin research; a critique of neurology experiments at Northwestern University; the clinical relevance of Dr Colin Blakemore's vision research, and the process of medical discovery, together with a number of book reviews.

Perspectives on Medical Research Volume 4 1993 Edited by Stephen R Kaufman and Kathryn Hahner. Medical Research Modernization Committee: New York. 78pp. Paperback. Obtainable from the publishers, PO Box 2751 Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163-2751, USA (ISBN 0 9623858 9 1) Price US\$10 including postage.

The welfare argument

A resource pack has been produced by Compassion in World Farming Trust (CIWF Trust) with the primary intention of encouraging informed debate on farm animal welfare in agricultural colleges and in university agriculture and veterinary departments. The long-term hope is that this will lead to real improvements at the farm level.

The pack contains four separate booklets which cover the welfare of pigs; dairy cows; broiler chickens, and laying hens in battery cages. They are between ten and fourteen pages long, stylishly laid out; illustrated with large colour photographs, and each finishes with some twenty selected references. Generally, the argument is against intensive animal husbandry but the booklets do attempt to strike a balance between extreme views: they do for example point out the problems seen in some of the so-called alternative systems.

CIWF Trust intends, in the future, to extend the coverage to other areas of farm animal welfare.

The Welfare Argument Resource pack from Compassion in World Farming Trust (1993). Wallet and four A4 booklets. Obtainable from CIWF Trust, Charles House, 5A Charles Street, Petersfield, Hampshire GU32 3EH, UK. Price £5.00, or £2.00 each for orders of 10 or more copies.