



Animal free challenge for young researchers

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Young scientists who wish to go into a career without ever being expected to use animals need to be determined, resourceful and tenacious. That is the conclusion of new research published in FRAME's online discussion board PiLAS. It is based on a survey into attitudes faced by young scientists, carried out as part of the Lush Prize scheme.

Award winners were published in the sixth issue of ATLA – FRAME's scientific journal – last year. The scheme offers bursaries to young researchers who want to develop a career in toxicology without using animals. Their views, as well as those of several organisations involved in promoting alternatives to animal experiments, were gathered by Katy Brown from the Ethical Consumer Research Association, co-sponsors of the awards. Her report is published in PiLAS, FRAME's online discussion board.

She said scientists working in institutions with research groups dedicated to animal alternatives found it easier to follow their chosen career path, but those in other centres often faced challenges including funding issues and resistance from colleagues. Two of the young people he interviewed for the survey reported changing their career, largely due to the issues they faced over animal use.

One interviewee said she was shocked by fellow students' apparent indifference to the subject of animal-based research and their perceived inability to change institutional attitudes. She felt she would have to face court proceedings to confirm her right not to carry out dissection and vivisection as part of her studies.

Another student said the people leading his research group would not accept that non-animal methods were effective. He described feeling 'boxed in' with his only options being to carry out animal work or to leave.

Others reported facing strongest opposition at undergraduate level because of institutional pressures and constraints on time and funding. However, even at postgraduate level some students faced hostility if they questioned the effectiveness and design of animal experiments.

Even in institutions where researchers felt supported in their stance there were problems gaining funding. Most grants were issued by small organisation dedicated to animal alternatives and animal rights. Commercial companies tended to concentrate mostly on reduction and refinement, rather than encouraging replacement methods.

A full report of the survey can be found at <http://pilas.org.uk/43-1brown/>

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FRAME is the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments.

It promotes the replacement of laboratory animals with non-animal methods, through better science.

Its ultimate aim is the elimination of the need to use laboratory animals in any kind of scientific or medical procedures.