

Messages to Respond to the Misleading Claim that “90 percent of basic research, most of which involves animals, fails to lead to human therapies”

- Animal research opponents frequently claim “90 percent of basic research, most of which involves animals, fails to lead to human therapies.”
- The source of the claim is a 2014 review paper published in the British Medical Journal . It is worth noting that one of the authors is a vocal animal research opponent: Aysha Akhtar, M.D., M.P.H., has written several articles for The Huffington Post under the banner “Why Animal Experimentation Doesn’t Work.” In fact, of the more than 20 articles she has written for this single publication alone, nearly all criticize animal studies.
- Her opinions are noteworthy because they conflict with leading experts and authorities including the American Medical Association, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, the American Veterinary Medical Association, the National Institutes of Health and the Society for Neuroscience, just to name a few.
- Dr. Akhtar’s personal bias is furthermore problematic because good science requires the observation of data without pre-established conclusions. Nearly every argument can be bolstered with data if an individual has personal prejudices or agendas.
- Furthermore, the suggestion that basic science research is conducted with the specific goal of developing therapies is highly inaccurate. Cornell Law School’s Legal Information Institute defines basic research as “systematic study directed toward greater knowledge or understanding of the fundamental aspects of phenomena and of observable facts without specific applications towards processes or products in mind.”
- In other words, the goal of basic health research IS NOT to develop therapies. Instead, it is conducted to help us understand how living systems work. Therefore, of course only a small number of basic science studies would be connected to therapies.