

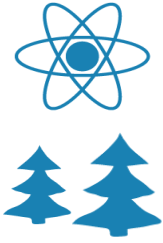
“You’re a monster!”

How to embrace public criticism of your research,  
and end up making new friends

CNIC PhDay 2018  
Madrid, 23 November 2018

Florian Alexander Dehmelt  
Pro-Test Deutschland e.V.





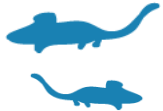
## Physics & Biology,

about 10 years of research in  
theoretical, experimental neuroscience (Germany, France, Portugal)



## Molecular research:

mechanical force-balance biochips in drug development



## Animal experiments, in **juvenile rats**:

basic research on audio-tactile integration

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## Computational neuroscience:

basic research on haemodynamics, neural networks



## Animal experiments, in **zebrafish larvae**:

basic research on visuomotor circuits

*+ lectures (mathematics, data analysis)*

*+ science communication*



# My position on animal experiments

1 | Animal research, in principle, is **useful**.

2 | It also raises tough **ethical** questions.

**We** conclude that most experiments are morally justified.

**Others** disagree, for often non-trivial reasons.

**Most others**, however, simply are at a loss... or they don't care.

3 | Scientists, staff and students know more than most others,  
have **responsibility** to share, and be held accountable.

Institutions, more often than not,  
struggle to shoulder this responsibility.



With or without us, the public debate is happening.



# PR campaigners are having a field day



*“10 reasons to protest  
animal experiments”*



Ärzte gegen Tierversuche e.V.

10 Gründe  
um gegen Tierversuche  
zu protestieren



[www.harry-hilft-tieren.de](http://www.harry-hilft-tieren.de)

## 9. Heimlichkeit

Tierexperimentatoren dürfen selbst bestimmen, ob sie ihre Versuche bekannt machen. Wir dürfen ihnen nicht zusehen. Deshalb wissen viele Menschen nicht, was mit den Tieren passiert, wie wenig Tierversuche nützen und wie viel Schaden sie anrichten. Tierschutzorganisationen fordern, dass alles, was mit Tierversuchen zu tun hat, gezeigt und veröffentlicht werden muss.



**Alle Menschen bezahlen mit ihren Steuern Tierversuche, dürfen sie aber nicht sehen und erfahren oft nicht einmal ihre Ergebnisse.**

*“No. 9: Secrecy”*

*“The public pays for animal experiments (...) but is not allowed to see them (...).”*



# Effective channels of communication



The image shows a screenshot of a YouTube video player. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the YouTube logo and a search bar. The video itself shows two people in a laboratory setting; a man in a suit is gesturing while talking to a woman in a lab coat. Below the video, the title 'The Problem with Lab Mice' is displayed, along with view counts (975,853 views), like and comment counts (26K likes, 3K comments), and a share button. The channel name 'CollegeHumor' is visible, along with a 'SUBSCRIBE 12M' button. A description at the bottom reads: 'Mouse trials are easy, cheap and apply to humans less than 80% of the time.'

YouTube DE Search

0:38 / 4:39

The Problem with Lab Mice

975,853 views 26K 3K SHARE

CollegeHumor Published on 15 Nov 2017

SUBSCRIBE 12M

Mouse trials are easy, cheap and apply to humans less than 80% of the time.





Pro-Test Deutschland e.V.

non-profit

volunteers only

shared values & experiences,  
but different opinions



Pro-Test Deutschland e.V.

non-affiliated

funded exclusively by small,  
private donations

consensus-driven



A bunch of individuals...





Yasemin Gültekin



Renee Hartig



Konstantin Hartmann



Florian Hohnstein

...showing their names and faces.



Felicitas Horn



Peter Kraemer



Carsten Klein



Andrew Lee




Basic Research - Pro-Test ...

www.pro-test-deutschland.de/en/themen/grundlagenforschung/


- Can Bacteria Get Colds? Restriction Enzymes
- Electrical Conduction in Gas: X-Rays
- The Physics of Bubbles: Surfactant
- Oxygen in Urine: Tissue Respiration
- The Twitching Frog Leg: Bioelectricity
- Conclusion

## Why do we need basic research?

Every aspect of applied research – be it the development of drugs, machines or any other methods – is based on the knowledge of basic underlying principles. In order to invent light bulbs, we first needed to understand the physical principles of electricity. In order to develop antibiotics, we first had to understand the metabolic pathways present in bacteria, and also how bacteria could cause infectious diseases! Applied research projects grow like tree branches from the trunk of basic knowledge.



www.pro-test-deutschland.de



**Julie Pantoliano – Community Relations**

I do not know much about the details of science, I have never been in a lab. BUT I do know one thing: hope. I know that when I work with family after family and child after child, my heart leaps with joy every time we have a new clinical trial. I also know that clinical trials are not possible without animal research.


So from all of us working in the field of neuroscience, that animal research is not possible without neurofibromatosis.



**Florian Hohnstein**  
PhD Student | Pro-Test Deutschland  
Leipzig, Deutschland

In meinem Umkreis versuche ich zu erklären, was dieses „Pro-Test Deutschland“ eigentlich macht. „Wir setzen uns für Tierversuche ein“, sage ich lapidar. Als Antwort bekomme ich prompt Kommentare wie „Aber man soll doch keine Tierversuche machen?“.

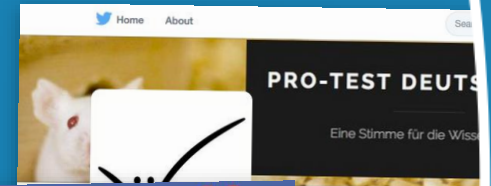
Zwei Dinge werden mir klar. Zum Einen, wie tief verankert dieses Bild bei den meisten zu sein scheint. „Tierversuche sind schlecht.“, so einfach ist das. Keine Differenzierung, keine Abwägung, kein Hinterfragen. Zum Anderen, dass dieses Thema dermaßen heikel ist, dass schon die Formulierung einer Aussage darüber entscheiden kann, ob beide Seiten in die Diskussion mit einem offenen Ohr und Interesse für die Argumente der Gegenseite einsteigen oder ob Beleidigungen und moralische Anschuldigungen das Gespräch bestimmen.

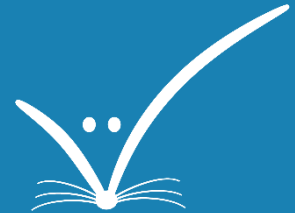
**Annette Bakker**

I love animals... one knows what before giving it to done ethically and imaging will be used but until a major breakthrough will unfortunately not be able to cure models

Twitter  
@ProTestDE

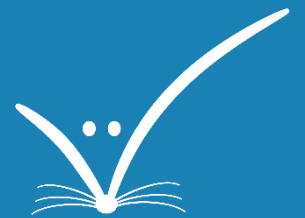


facebook.com/  
protestdeutschland



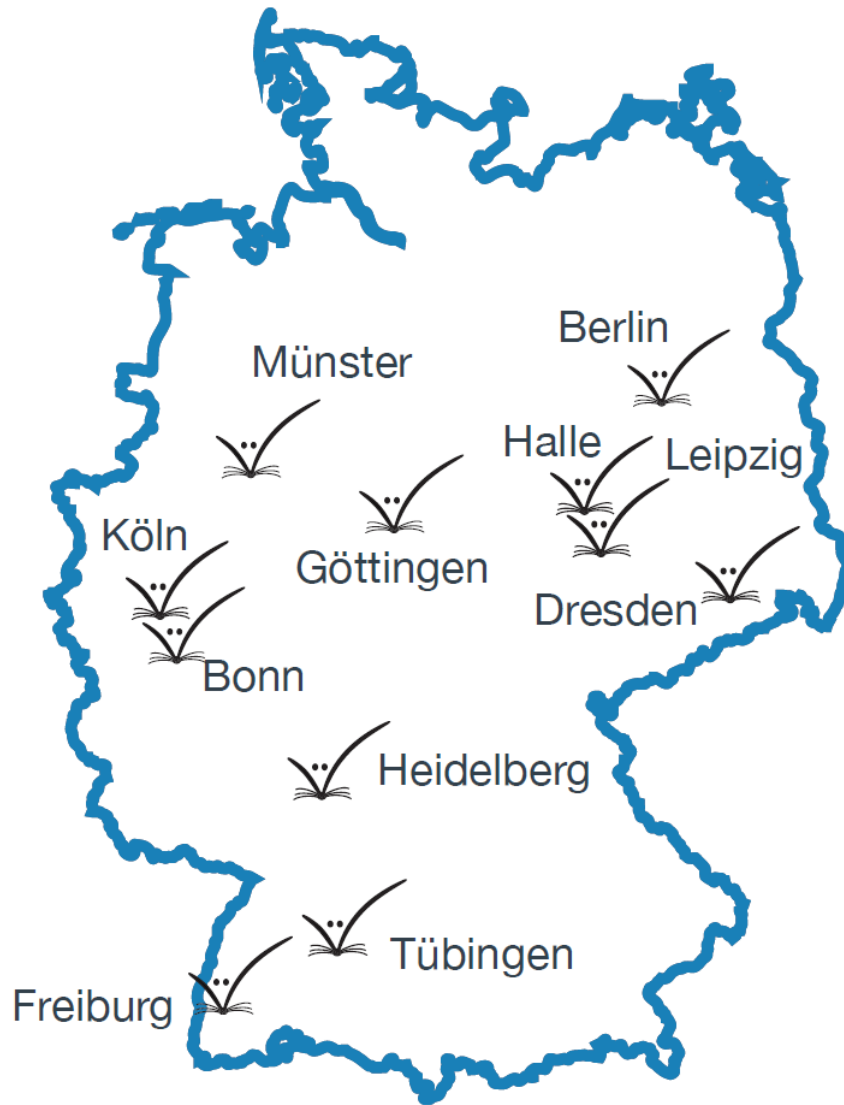


© Juan Medina, Reuters





currently 70-75 volunteers



DE



CH



IT



UK



MU


BE



US



Hosted by YouTube channel "mailab"



The screenshot shows a YouTube video player interface. At the top left is the YouTube logo with 'DE' next to it. A search bar contains the text 'tiere töten schönschlaui'. The video frame shows a man with dark hair, glasses, and a beard, wearing a grey hoodie, gesturing with his hands while speaking. The video progress bar at the bottom of the frame shows 7:38 / 18:42. Below the video frame, the title 'Wie fühlt es sich an Tiere zu töten? #AskAScientist' is displayed, along with 28,657 views, 2K likes, and 153 comments. The channel name 'schönschlaui' and the publication date 'Published on 31 Jan 2018' are visible. A red 'SUBSCRIBE 30K' button is located in the bottom right corner of the video player area.

YouTube DE

tiere töten schönschlaui

Wie fühlt es sich an Tiere zu töten? #AskAScientist

28,657 views

schönschlaui  
Published on 31 Jan 2018

SUBSCRIBE 30K





## Science & Society

# Talking about animal research

Scientists and their institutions need to communicate more proactively to counter claims of mistreatment by animal rights activists

Katrin Weigmann

In June 2015, the extremist group Animal Liberation Front (ALF) destroyed two trucks belonging to Harlan Laboratories in Ontario, Canada. In the same month, Nikos Logothetis, a renowned neuroscientist at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics in Tübingen, Germany, announced that he would abandon his research on nonhuman primates after months of harassment and slander from animal rights activists. In May 2014 and April 2013, animal rights activists forced their way into the Pharmacology Department of the University of Milan, Italy. They spread paint, broke glass, and removed information tags from animal cages, destroying years of work. In April 2014, the *Tierschutzgegner Bundesrepublik Deutschland* placed a full-page advertisement in a number of Germany's national and regional newspapers, accusing neuroscientist Andreas Kreiter at the University of Bremen of "torturing" nonhuman primates in "pseudoscientific" experiments.

*"... reluctance to speak up leads to a paucity of information about the use of animals in research, which benefits animal rights activists."*

Most scientists are fortunate that they do not become the target of such attacks. None-

theless, reluctance among people to engage in a public debate," said David Jentsch, a behavioral neuroscientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, (UCLA), who has been personally attacked and is now fighting back.

However, this reluctance to speak up leads to a paucity of information about the use of animals in research, which benefits animal rights activists. "We delivered an informational void to the public and then stepped aside to allow fanatics to fill it with all kinds of fiction," said Cindy Buckmaster, Director of the Center for Comparative Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in the USA and Chair of Americans for Medical Progress, a charity that promotes public understanding of the use of animals in biomedical research. Animal rights groups fill this information void with their side of the story along with misinformation about the use and fate of animals in biomedical research. The debate is strongly polarized, making it difficult for scientists to put forward a more nuanced view. Speaking up, some might think, is futile, or they might fear that they will draw themselves to the attention of activists. But if scientists ever want to escape the vicious circle of misinformation and fear, they need to tell the public their side of the story. "This philosophy of sticking our heads in the sand is fatal because it nourishes the myth of the animal rights activists that scientists have something to hide," said Christina Beck, Head of the Press and Public Relations Office of the Max Planck Society in Munich, Germany.

German activist group SOKO Tierschutz infiltrated the Max Planck Institute in Tübingen in September last year, determined to produce video material that could be used to demonstrate cruelty against animals. The German broadcast magazine Stern TV made the footage public in a highly manipulative context intended to stir up emotion. SOKO Tierschutz organized a demonstration in Tübingen, which attracted up to 1,200 participants, while researchers and their families received hate mail and were harassed and threatened. Nikos Logothetis, Director at the institute, eventually announced that he would stop working with primates. Although Christina Beck is located in Munich, where the Max Planck Society has its administrative offices, she took over the communication lead at the Tübingen Institute, which did not have a press officer at that time.

*"... if scientists ever want to escape the vicious circle of misinformation and fear, they need to tell the public their side of the story."*

Communication during a crisis is extremely difficult and follows its own rules that are distinct from common practice in science. "There is no room to explain things at length; you have to resort to simple and clear claims and have to be aware that your opponent is operating on a very emotional level."



# What we need to do

Enable a more enlightened debate.

Provide facts and figures to fuel the debate – not to “win” it.

Establish a personal rapport, share thoughts and feelings.

**Earn the trust** of others.

*No fuzziness or euphemisms, clearly voicing our own opinion.*

*Stay intellectually honest, never oversimplify.*

*Open-minded, respectful, diverse opinions within.*



You.





Pro-Test Deutschland e.V.

florian.dehmelt @  
info @ pro-test-deutschland.de