



Project Chimps

Activity Name: Chimpanzees in Laboratories

Learning Objectives: L6-8WHST1, S7L1, S7L4, SB5.b

Grade/Age Level: 6-12

Estimated Time: 3-4 hours onsite w/ tour, 60-90 min. in classroom/virtual

Materials: paper, pens, pencils, whiteboard, markers

Methods: discuss, explore, compare, contrast, research

Goal: Educate students on the history of chimpanzees in labs and the current laboratories that still have chimpanzees.

Background Information:

- **Laboratory for Experimental Medicine and Surgery in Primates (LEMSIP)**
 - Established in 1965, with the goal of becoming a federally funded primate research center, LEMSIP remained a private laboratory until it closed in 1997. The lab, located in New York City, was part of New York University's (NYU) School of Medicine.
 - Intensive biomedical research was done at LEMSIP with a focus in areas such as:
 - reproduction
 - blood transfusions
 - hepatitis B
 - HIV
 - The chimps at LEMSIP were kept individually in small, steel cages that hung from the ceiling. Jan Moor-Jankowski, MD was LEMSIP's director and claimed that urine and feces running down from cages actually "maintained a healthier environment" compared to cleaning away their waste, giving you an idea of the chimps living conditions. Chimps at LEMSIP never went outdoors and received little to no enrichment. Babies were separated from their mothers soon after birth.
 - Over time, Dr. Moor-Jankowski began to doubt their efforts and started questioning the efficacy of using chimps as a model for humans. One veterinarian at LEMSIP, James Mahoney, began working with sanctuaries and was believed to have smuggled out over 100 chimpanzees from the lab to place them in sanctuaries.
 - In the late 1990s, Moor-Jankowski released information to USDA that led to **378** violations by LEMSIP of the **Animal Welfare Act (AWA)**.
 - In 1997 the laboratory was closed by NYU and the chimps were sent to the Coulston Foundation.



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- In 2002, (see below) some of these chimps were moved to Save the Chimps as well as the Fauna Foundation, Wildlife Waystation and the Primate Rescue Center in Kentucky.
- **The Coulston Foundation (TCF)**
 - Fred Coulston was a toxicologist, who in the 1970s, was able lease chimps from Holloman Air Force Base that were no longer being used by the air force, from the government. Throughout the 70s he conducted toxicology studies on the chimps and promoted chimpanzees as being great test subjects for human comparison. Of course, we now know that this is not the case.
 - In the 1980s, Coulston gave up his lease on the government-owned chimps and opened his own research center called the **White Sands Research Center**, in Alamogordo, NM and the care of the government-owned chimpanzees from Holloman were turned over to New Mexico State University (NMSU).
 - In 1993, NMSU decided they did not want the chimps anymore and all 288 were donated back to Fred Coulston, along with grants for their lifelong care. It was at this time he renamed his lab the Coulston Foundation, which was supposedly a safe retirement home for these chimps.
 - In 1997, LEMSIP closed and TCF received 100+ of their chimps.
 - TCF was known for having horrible, unsanitary living conditions and many violations of the Animal Welfare Act. They struggled to keep veterinarians on staff and were repeatedly fined for providing inadequate care.
 - From 1993-2001 TCF was responsible for 35 chimpanzee deaths.
 - In 2001, the **National Institute of Health (NIH)** pulled all of it's funding from TCF.
 - In 2002, **Save the Chimps (StC)** purchased TCF and gained custody of all 266 of their chimps!!
 - While the majority of TCF chimps made it to StC, some of them are still in Alamogordo at the Alamogordo Primate Facility, where there are currently 44 chimps.
- **New Iberia Research Center (NIRC), University of Louisiana, Lafayette.**
 - Established in 1984, The University of Louisiana at Lafayette, New Iberia Research Center "specializes in the breeding, management, and importation of a diverse range of nonhuman primate species and offers a broad range of diagnostic, laboratory, and human resources for the development and characterization of nonhuman primate models for applied and basic research aimed at promoting human quality of life."
 - When NIRC first opened, their primary focus was "to provide private industry and the federal government with a reliable source of native born, quality-bred nonhuman primates." In 1990, NIRC "expanded its mission by providing evaluations of pharmaceuticals and biotechnology products." Some of things they did in their lab were:



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- Drug safety studies
- Drug efficacy studies
- Basic biology studies in HCV infected chimpanzees
- Therapeutic studies (i.e., studies for hepatitis C vaccines and therapies)
- Behavioral studies and sampling studies on control animals
- From 1995 until they ended their breeding program in 2014, over 200 chimps were born at NIRC.
- In 2009, NIRC received a series of AWA violations and the **Humane Society of the United States** (HSUS) got involved to begin the process of getting chimps out of NIRC and into sanctuary.
- There are still about 100 chimps at the lab awaiting their turn to come to the sanctuary. While experimentation is no longer allowed, the chimps are still living in the lab. The lab does have outdoor enclosures that the chimps can go in to see sunshine, but otherwise they have never been outside without caging over their heads and grass under their feet. In addition, before coming to Project Chimps, the majority have never seen a member of the opposite sex.
- Labs that still house chimpanzees:
 - In November 2013, an amendment to the **Chimpanzee Health Improvement, Maintenance and Protection Act** (CHIMP Act) removed a \$30 million cap on federal spending for chimpanzees in laboratories and it became acceptable for labs to receive funds, if they retired their chimps to sanctuary. Numerous labs created their own “sanctuaries” to keep their chimps and continue to get this funding.
 - **Texas Biomedical Research Institute** in San Antonio, TX became the **Southwest National Primate Research Center (SNPRC)** and built a “**Chimpanzee Retirement Village**” where over 100 chimpanzees live. They want to keep their chimps in case of any future research possibilities. While biomedical research on chimpanzees is illegal, behavioral studies can and still is conducted.
 - **Alamogordo Primate Facility** in New Mexico is also federally funded. Chimps from the Coulston Foundation and Holloman Air Force base that did not make it to Save the Chimps, Chimp Haven or another sanctuary still live here. They currently have 44 chimps. After retiring 51 chimps to Chimp Haven in 2017 and having 9 of those chimps die within 2 years, they decided not to give any more chimps to sanctuary and instead to keep them where they are.
 - **MD Anderson Cancer Center** has the **National Center for Chimpanzee Care** in Bastrop, TX where they continue to do voluntary behavioral research. They have retired some of their chimps to Chimp Haven but are holding onto over 100 chimpanzees at their Texas facility.



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- **Yerkes National Primate Research Center** at Emory University in Atlanta has 47 chimpanzees and continues to conduct behavioral research on them as well as many other types of primates. Studies include addiction, specifically cocaine related, in addition to looking at how primates deal with stress. While these studies are not “invasive” they are inhumane. Yerkes is currently under review by the USDA. They received \$80 million from the NIH in 2017.

Procedures:

1. **Discuss.** Have a discussion on:
 - a. The History of Chimpanzees in Labs
 - b. The Current Laboratories that still have Chimpanzees
2. **Tour.** If onsite- take your tour!
3. **Activities.** Complete 1 or more of the activities below. All lesson plans can be shared to complete more activities back in the classroom post field trip.
4. **Assessment.** Discuss the assessment questions below.

Activities:

1. **Compare and Contrast.** (6-12) Make a Venn Diagram to examine the similarities and differences of medical and behavioral research on primates.
2. **Write.** (6-12) Write a letter to the National Institute of Health encouraging them to stop all experiments on primates.
3. **Discuss.** (6-12) James Mahoney was the LEMSIP veterinarian who smuggled chimps out of the lab and was able to get over 100 chimps to different sanctuaries where they would never be subject to experimentation again. Do you think he did the right thing? Why or why not? Give support for your answers. What would you have done if you were in his shoes?
4. **Critical Thinking.** (9-12) Develop an alternative to using primates in behavioral and/or medical research. How else can we learn about humans without hurting other species?
5. **Research.** (9-12) What primates are currently subjected to research? What types of studies continue in labs that remain open?

Assessment:

1. Why were chimps used as an early model for human based research?
2. Why are chimps NOT a good model for human research?
3. Should the federal government continue to pay for research on primates? Should our tax dollars help perpetuate these studies?

Conclusion:



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The lives of chimpanzees in laboratories have been full of violations and debate over acceptable levels of care. While medical research is now illegal on chimpanzees, behavioral research is still being conducted. There also continues to be a wide variety of other primates used in invasive experiments.

Notes to Instructor:

- [Chimpanzees in laboratories Assessment Questions](#)
- [A Report on the Chimpanzees of the Coulston Foundation](#)
- Please use your judgement to adapt this lesson to different age groups.
- Thank you for being a part of our community!