

Media release



Who is investing in experiments with genetically engineered chimpanzees?

Report on investment links between financial institutions and the pharmaceutical industry

2 June 2015 / Testbiotech is today publishing a report on companies that apply for patents on animals such as mice, dogs and apes, and on financial institutions that invest in them. These patents turn animals into a product that might be commercialised at maximum profit – just like many other patented products. Out of the ten largest global pharmaceutical corporations, Hoffmann La-Roche (and its subsidiary Genentech), Pfizer and Novartis file the highest number of relevant patent applications. According to database research, they have each applied for around 100 to 400 patents that concern animals and its usages. The companies Altor BioScience, Bionomics and Intrexon have also been included in the report because they even hold patents on genetically engineered chimpanzees.

Important investors in this field include well-known financial institutions such as Credit Suisse, Deutsche Bank, HSBC, JP Morgan Chase and UBS but also the Norwegian Pension Fund. Letters were sent to these financial institutions in April, but so far none of them have replied with anything of substance. Now these topics will be discussed at a conference on 17 June in Berlin.

“For several years there has been a noticeable trend towards more and more experiments with genetically engineered animals. The reason for this lies not only in the desire to discover potential medical benefits, but also, as evidenced by the patent applications, in potential economic gain”, says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. “In this regard, companies as well as investors must take responsibility. But so far, there is a lack of sufficiently robust standards for ethical investment in this context.”

Testbiotech believes that European governments should also take action. Legal initiatives should aim to introduce specific animal rights, for example, to protect the genetic integrity of animals. In addition, patents on animals should be prohibited.

The new report was drawn up for Testbiotech by Profundo, a Dutch economic research consultancy analysing financial institutions and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) issues.

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The new report: www.testbiotech.org/node/1261

Letters to the financial institutions: www.testbiotech.org/node/1262

The Conference in Berlin: www.testbiotech.org/sites/default/files/Program_Berlin_Engl.pdf