



P H Y S I C I A N S  
C O M M I T T E E  
F O R  
R E S P O N S I B L E  
M E D I C I N E

5100 WISCONSIN AVENUE, NW • SUITE 400

WASHINGTON, DC 20016

(202) 686-2210 • FAX: (202) 686-2216

WWW.PCRM.ORG

August 10, 2007

To whom it may concern:

I am an ethologist and research scientist with the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine, a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting safe, ethical and high quality research and health treatments. I have ten years experience in academia studying animal behavior and an additional 15 years working professionally in animal protection issues. I have published numerous scientific papers on animal behavior and animals in research and education, as well as two books, the second being *Pleasurable Kingdom: Animals and the Nature of Feeling Good* (Macmillan 2006).

I wish to go on record as opposing the exploitation of dolphins and people alike in Dolphin Assisted Therapy (DAT) programs for the following reasons:

- 1) There are no rigorous scientific data to support the contention that DAT has any lasting clinical benefit to patients with autism or any other condition. As a result, it would be irresponsible and professionally unethical to promote or support DAT as an appropriate prescriptive response from the medical community.
- 2) The practice involves human welfare risks from potential injury, disease transmission, and financial loss.
- 3) Confining dolphins to aquaria or other enclosed spaces is cruel, undeserved punishment for these animals, whose wild existence involves swimming freely in family groups over ranges of tens of thousands of square miles.
- 4) While being in the water with dolphins is fun and may temporarily brighten up humans of all ages, the same effect can be had from any number of alternative activities not exploitative of other sentient beings or risky to the welfare of human participants.

In sum, DAT is a means of profit at the expense of humans hoodwinked into thinking it has demonstrable healthcare benefits, and captive dolphins who have no choice in their participation. Potential customers must be made aware of the problems with DAT and discouraged from investing in it.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Balcombe, PhD  
Senior Research Scientist