

# Vitals

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## MULTIMEDIA

**ABSTRACT:** Where do we draw the line between what is ethically permissible in scientific research and what is morally wrong? How does the urgent need for advancement in scientific knowledge conflict with the rights on sentient animals? This dramatic piece, based loosely off the events of the 1984 Head Injury Experiments at the University of Pennsylvania and ensuing controversy, aims to explore these difficult questions. When a young lab research assistant becomes attached to a baboon in a lab that investigates head trauma, she begins to question her involvement in the experimental process she helps facilitate. On one hand, the brain research is important—it could lead to important advances in treatment of debilitating brain injuries. On the other hand, she is part of the machinery injuring and killing baboons in unusually cruel ways. Finally, she questions whether her involvement matters anyways: after all, some other research assistant will surely take her place if she quits. Her own internal ethical conflict, amidst one of the most controversial animal experiments done in the United States, helps to shed light on the complexity of the ethics of biomedical research.

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