



The Humane Society of the United States' **Animal Research News & Analysis** March 31, 2004

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1. Courts Dismiss Lawsuit on Primate Well-being

On March 2, 2004, the US District Court in Northern California dismissed a lawsuit that challenged the US Department of Agriculture's implementation of a provision to ensure the psychological well-being of nonhuman primates in captivity. The suit had been filed by the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) and three individuals in July, 2003, claiming that the USDA had failed to take effective action. In 1985, amendments to the Animal Welfare Act required the USDA to create standards to "promote the psychological well-being of primates." The USDA responded by adopting new standards in 1991. However, the agency announced in 1996 that these new standards needed clarification to be made enforceable. The USDA created a draft policy in 1999, but that has yet to be adopted. Subsequently, three individuals came forward with specific cases of alleged violations of existing USDA standards on psychological well-being of primates, and these individuals later joined with the ALDF and AWI to file a legal complaint. The suit sought to compel the USDA to fulfill its obligation to set enforceable and humane standards for psychological well-being.

The District Court's recent ruling claimed that the plaintiffs "fail to establish that the Secretary [of Agriculture] has genuinely failed to meet this statutory duty." The Court added that "plaintiffs have cited no authority prohibiting the Secretary from changing her position on the need for further policy developments in light of the Circuit Court's approval of the 1991 regulations." The ruling is a blow to animal protectionists who had sought better conditions for nonhuman primates in research laboratories, zoos and other regulated facilities.

Sources: AWI press release (<http://awionline.org/new/ppolicysuit.htm>); Americans for Medical Progress press release

2. UVA Medical School to End Dog Labs

The University of Virginia recently announced that its medical school will discontinue its dog labs, in which students perform medical procedures on healthy dogs. The February 26th announcement came a month after a group of medical students at the Charlottesville-based University publicly called for an end to the labs. The publicity generated a wave of emails, letters, and phone calls urging the medical school to stop the practice. UVA now joins a long list of medical schools across the country that no longer use dog labs.

Following the public outcry, the University had established a Review Committee to examine the medical school's policy on live-animal labs. The committee's report noted that there had been sufficient advances in non-animal alternatives to offset the need for live dogs in teaching labs. According to the report, the "Curriculum Committee should be asked to develop programs without using dogs that meet the educational needs of medical students for emergency care skills and for surgical skills." However, the report also suggested that there are procedures in which live animal use would be justified. Such an exception would apply to medical residents, fellows, and practicing physicians (as distinct from students), and would be in effect only until suitable simulations are available. The UVA Medical School decided to accept the committee's recommendations and will implement the changes this year.

Sources: Citizens for Humane Medicine; UVA Announcement, February 4, 2004; Cavalier Daily, March 1, 2004; The Daily Progress, February 27, 2004
www.dailyprogress.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=CDP%2FMGArticle%2FCDP_BasicArticle&c=MGArticle&cid=1031773929864&rendermode=preview&path=!news

3. Recent Announcements of Three Rs Awards

Several awards were bestowed recently in recognition of outstanding accomplishments or promising research proposals in the field of the Three Rs of replacement, reduction and refinement of animal use in research. The 2003 Björn Ekwall Memorial Award was given to Dr. Per Kjellstrand of Gambro AB, (Lund, Sweden) for his work in the development of in vitro screening for acute toxicity. This award is given in memory of Dr. Björn Ekwall who founded the Scandinavian Society for Cell Toxicology. The 2003 GlaxoSmithKline Laboratory Animal Welfare Prize was awarded to the Norwegian Reference Centre for Laboratory Animal Science and Alternatives, in acknowledgment of Centre's commitment to the Three Rs and its contribution to providing expert information on laboratory animal welfare and non-animal alternatives. The Centre maintains the NORINA database on alternatives to animals used in education and training, as well as TextBase, a database of text books in lab animal science.

The Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) and the Johns Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing (CAAT) awarded their 2004 Animal Welfare Enhancement Awards in March. The awards aim to fund projects that will explore refinement issues such as noninvasive indicators of pain and distress and the use of conditioning or training techniques to reduce stress levels. Thirteen winners were awarded \$6,000 each to complete their studies. For more information on the winners, visit <http://caat.jhsph.edu/programs/AWE/awards.htm>. The AWI has also put a call out for nominations to their second Refinement Award. \$3,000 (US) will be awarded to a study proposal that will evaluate the impact of a moderate increase of unstructured versus structured cage space on space usage and behavioral/physiological well-being parameters in

individually housed dogs or macaques. Proposals should be sent to viktorawi@siskiyou.net by May 1, 2004.

Sources: ATLA, Volume 31, Issue 6, pg 549-550, December 2003; Altweb press release, March 18, 2003; LAREF Digest Number 375

4. *BMJ* Article on the Value of Animal Research

The title of a recent article in the *British Medical Journal* asks, "Where is the evidence that animal research benefits humans?" The authors sought to answer this question by analyzing systematic reviews of six sets of animal studies and comparing the results of these studies with the corresponding human clinical trials of potential therapies. The findings were revealing. In two of the six cases, the animal studies were conducted concurrently with the human research, rather than the expected pattern of preceding the human studies. In two other cases, human trials moved forward even though the results from the animal models showed serious evidence of harm. According to the authors, these findings suggest that the animal data were considered largely irrelevant. They also found that many of the animal experiments were poorly designed and that some animal findings translated poorly to the human situation. Overall, the analysis reveals a disturbing disconnect between the animal and human studies, calling into question the practical value of the former.

The authors called for greater scrutiny of animal studies in order to help avoid problems such as running human and animal studies simultaneously, and ignoring or selectively using animal data. They argued that the results from animal studies and human trials should be compared to see how well one predicts the other. This could paint a clearer picture of the role animal research plays in human medical research.

The HSUS believes that systematic reviews of the value of animal experimentation in specific fields of research are far too rare. They have the potential to benefit both animal welfare and human medicine.

Sources: British Medical Journal, Volume 328, pg 514-517, February 28, 2004; BBC, February 27, 2004 (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/3489952.stm>)

5. UK to Reveal Plans for National Center on Alternative Methods

A British official recently disclosed that his office would soon announce plans for the development of a national center to pursue the replacement, reduction and refinement (Three Rs) of animal experimentation. The statement, by Lord Sainsbury, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Science and Innovation for the UK's Department of Trade and Industry, came late February during a Parliamentary discussion on the future of neuroscience testing in the United Kingdom. In October of 2003, the Parliament made clear the need to devote resources to alternative methods, as the Three Rs are "not pursued as a focused activity."

The government proposal has gained some support in both the scientific and animal welfare communities. Stephen Holgate, a professor of immunopharmacology at Southampton University, was quoted as saying: "I think it's a super idea. A centre brings a focus, which is

excellent.” Although Lord Sainsbury stated he hoped to publicize the centre’s plans “within a few days,” to date, no formal announcement has been made. Some outstanding issues are whether or not the center will be a free-standing entity or added to an existing entity, what role the new center will have vis-à-vis existing pro-alternatives organizations such as the Fund for the Replacement of Alternatives in Medical Experiments (FRAME), and the relative emphasis that the new center will give to replacement, reduction, and refinement.

Sources: *The Guardian*, February 27, 2004

(<http://www.guardian.co.uk/animalrights/story/0,11917,1156334,00.html>); *House of Lords Official Report (Hansard)*, February 24, 2004 and October 17, 2003

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