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HUMANE SCIENCE

NEWS

Volume 19 Number 1 2006

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The Regulatory Framework for Reviewing External Proposals Submitted to an Animal Ethics Committee

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The issues associated with any institutional Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) considering proposals that have been submitted by individuals or organizations external to their parent institution are not new, but they are vexed and likely to generate both informed and uninformed opinion and views. This subject has been and will remain a topic for ongoing discussion in fora like this and in ethics committee meetings. There is no single definitive method that would allow us to review and effectively address all the issues raised when it comes to the question of assessing applications from external organisations. Nor is there any prescribed manner that can be applied to resolve the conflicting imperatives. Rather each situation, like each proposal must be assessed independently, using the information available, including if necessary interviewing the applicants and employing the collective skills, experience and knowledge of all individuals involved in the decision making process.

Privatization of Research and Growth in the Biotechnology Sector:

Increasingly, Institutional AECs are being approached by external organizations with requests to consider proposals on their behalf. While there can be no doubt that this is a very positive move as it is clearly better to have projects from small organizations being reviewed by an experienced and independent AEC than risk compromising our current system by having committees set up that only consider a handful of applications each year, it does put some pressure on the larger institutions and their AEC members. This has however, meant that these committees are increasingly being called on to consider more applications of greater diversity more frequently from external organisations during the last few years. This growing trend has probably been the result of changing dynamics within the undertaking and funding of research within Australia. As a consequence of greater emphasis being placed on collaborative research, particularly with large or grand projects, it is not unusual to have collaborations involving several institutions from diverse geographic locations and may involve both interstate and international perspectives. This has also meant an increase in applications from external research organisations, albeit in the traditional mould (ie from teaching hospitals and universities), as well as an upsurge in applications that pursue more commercial interests. That is, applications which are orientated toward clinical research on behalf of or in collaboration with commercial organisations, including those operating at the multinational level. There has also been an increase in the number of applications from locally based biotechnology and/or pharmaceutical companies. This trend reflects the progress made by many local companies in particular, that have now progressed to a point where they need to satisfy the regulatory regime concerning the development and safety testing of compounds for human consumption.

The consideration of these applications as well as those submitted by internal stakeholders where the primary funding source is a private company, in the form of a direct grant or as contract research, does not imply or infer that the monies are tainted or that the research outcomes are somehow inferior because they are not for immediate publication. However, what it does mean is that the AEC has a new set of parameters that will affect the way in which it operates.

Safety Testing and Meeting Regulatory Requirements:

The need to consider the regulatory issues surrounding science, particularly when proposals are concerned with satisfying the requirements of authorities such as the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) or the American food and Drug Administration (FDA) to facilitate the licensing of materials for release to the market, raises a number of conflicting tensions with respect to the Animal Welfare framework. What is interesting is that both regulatory regimes emanate from government at some level, but they are targeted at distinctively different outcomes. One is the welfare of animals used in medical/scientific research. The other to ensure the safety of products released on to the market for human consumption. However, in spite of some progress being made during recent times, neither has effectively considered the goals and regulatory requirements of the other.

Issues of Transparency versus Confidentiality:

One of the principal areas of tension between the objective of Animal Welfare and the commercial imperative concerns the issue of transparency.

The release of the 7th Edition of the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes and its incorporation into relevant animal welfare legislation around Australia, seeks to enhance public confidence and trust in the operation of animal ethics committees and in the value of animal experimentation. It intends to achieve this through the following:

i) The requirement for category D members to be independent of the institution (paragraph 2.2.2)

ii) The implementation of a more rigorous regime of regular external reviews (paragraph 2.1.2 and appendix 1). and

iii) The terms of reference for the animal ethics committee must be publicly available and must incorporate a number of provisions specifically designed to address concerns regarding confidence in the operation of the AEC system (paragraph 2.2.1).

In an attempt to further enhance public confidence in the current system, the NHMRC Animal Welfare (AWC) sent a letter to all AEC's in March 2005 stating, "other people with a specific interest in the role of C & D members can also join if they have an interest in the issues discussed". This expansion of audience to those who are outside the direct membership of the AEC places any discussion outside the legal purview of the AEC and thus beyond the boundaries and control of the organisation that the AEC is intended to support. It is also important to consider the potential implications that arise from various forms of assistance that may be offered to category C & D members in particular. Such assistance may include the provision of forums for discussing issues of interest or concern that are not without merit, but do (from the perspective of the organisation) potentially pose a conundrum with respect to confidentiality. The tension between the imperatives of transparency and confidentiality is an increasing concern as those twin imperatives will need to be reconciled if both public expectations and commercial requirements are to be met.

The increasing dependence on commercial organisations as a source of funding for medical research should not be seen in a negative light as it is a natural extension of the interaction between public and private organisations that are seeking to benefit the society in which they live, albeit from sometimes divergent perspectives. The benefits to society of developing intellectual property, in social, economic and clinical terms, cannot be denied and so it should not be portrayed as dirty or somehow of lower moral standard because the research has been developed by a private company. The benefits of such work would not otherwise be available to society, thus leaving everyone worse off.

Meeting Contractual Obligations:

In accepting research funding from private sources or for the provision of analytical services (often through contractual arrangements), a number of issues arise concerning the obligations imposed on the institution receiving the monies. Clearly this has implications with respect to how organisations conduct their operations but may also have perceived implications for the operations of an AEC and this must be carefully considered when the question of charging a processing fee (or equivalent) that may be tied to having an AEC consider proposals submitted by organizations external to the AEC's parent institution. In this context, any institution or AEC that charges a token processing fee should be mindful of the changes such payment makes to the legal nature of their relationship with the organization that is now "paying" for these services and the potential liability issues that may ensue.

Equally, any institution or AEC that wishes to charge for its services on the basis of full cost recovery and their potential liability needs to guard against any perception that approvals granted have been "purchased" or could ever be considered as "for sale".

Handling "Commercial – in – confidence" applications:

Another important obligation, particularly when associated with clinical trial agreements, is the requirement for any data to be treated as "commercial-in-confidence" and for any intellectual property arising from the conduct of those clinical trials to be owned by the organization funding the work, in accordance with arrangements stipulated in any contractual agreement. As the results of the clinical trial research could be significant with respect to the viability of the product in the market or for the company overall the normal dictum of "publish or perish" may not apply. In many agreements the researchers are expressly prohibited from publishing, as the data belongs to the company contracting the research, and it is that organisation which will determine, what, when and how any information is released or published. This is in stark contrast to the normal practice employed when undertaking basic research utilising NH&MRC, ARC, NIH grants or funds from most other granting bodies where the implicit if, not explicit, requirement is to publish in the highest impact or quality journal possible. For many start up Biotechnology companies the share price could and does, move significantly as a result of the outcome of the research or clinical trials. Accordingly, any breach in confidence with the unauthorised release of information or data about a project could have devastating consequences. This could be particularly pertinent to an AEC because many projects require the undertaking of specific trials on animals before release of that product or compound for use or testing in humans.

The TGA who regulates the use of medicines and medical devices in Australia has a responsibility in this area to ensure that the risk to humans is minimised. The objective of the TGA *"is to provide a national framework for the regulation of therapeutic goods in Australia to ensure the quality, safety and efficacy of medicines and to ensure the quality, safety and performance of medical devices".* The requirements of TGA are thought by some to be onerous; however, all would agree that compliance with their directives is mandatory. Thus the requirement to conduct safety tests for their compounds using animals may be non-negotiable. Further difficulty may occur when tests conducted in one of the species being used (safety testing normally requires the use of at least two species) exhibits an adverse reaction, even if this reaction is not unexpected for that particular species and will not ultimately prevent the product moving to the next stage of clinical testing.

The question then arises, "What happens if this matter is discussed by a member outside of the AEC?" Perhaps a member, surprised and taken back by the impact that the compound had on that specific species, discussed the impact, among friends, over a bottle of red or two, at a dinner party or a BBQ. Perhaps those people, disgusted at what they believe is the wanton destruction of these animals, discuss it with a wider circle of people, each elaborating upon the outcome a little bit more, giving greater emphasis to the deaths and the nature of the deaths, until eventually it reaches the media. Under these circumstances, this is not a story that any organisation responsible for developing a potentially therapeutic compound or doing pre-clinical safety and toxicology work under contract, would wish to see subjected for what residents of Adelaide refer to as the *"Sunday Mail"* test.

Let us postulate that as a consequence of this publication the share price plummets, investors become nervous, capital dries up and potential consumers become highly resistant to the product. The company is now facing extremely trying times and may be fighting for survival. This scenario is not that far fetched as the market, particularly in this country, can be brutal and with the tendency to under fund start-up biotechnology companies such stories can have devastating effects. This can also leave other small Biotechnology companies more susceptible to the vagaries of the market and can amplify the magnitude of fluctuations affecting the industry as a whole.

Clearly, this kind of scenario will be more acute for a company during the early phase of its life when they are more vulnerable to adverse (or for that matter positive) information with potential to impact on their share price. The chances of this occurring and the jitters in the market were illustrated in an article in the Sydney Morning Herald by Michael Evans entitled "Investors Baling Out of Biotechs" on Monday 11 April 2005, as the Biotech sector is perceived as "high risk". This potentially imposes a greater responsibility on a research organisation and it's AEC with respect to vigilance in observing the confidentiality of information contained in any submission and the outcome of any experimental program.

Having adversely impacted on the financial position and viability of the company for which the organisation was undertaking the testing, it is likely to be the subject of a claim for damages. The question remains as to what extent the organisation is responsible or liable for the action of our hypothetical AEC member who precipitated this chain of events. Clearly an organisation is vicariously liable for the actions of its employees and

those employees (at least in the Public Sector) are governed by Codes of Conduct and employment contractual provisions that specifically articulate a responsibility to respect the confidentiality of any information obtained through the conduct of their employment. However, in the case of a person who, under the code, must be independent of the organisation, the issues of responsibility and liability are unclear even though they may be appointed to the AEC by the organisation. In some jurisdictions such as South Australia, this is further complicated by the fact that all AEC members are nominated by the responsible organisation, but it is the responsible State Government Minister who must exercise the power to accept or deny such recommendations.

If an external AEC member is not remunerated by the organisation or the organisation does not have the final say on the appointment of that member and the organisation does not "control" the individual who then is responsible for the conduct of that member? Moreover, it is a potential outcome with respect to a breach of confidentiality concerning either the protocols or results of a specific project, which the organisation in defending an action would seek to join the individual as a third party or seek damages from them in their individual capacity. The very fact that Category C & D members are required to be independent of the organisation increases the probability of this and further weakens the nexus that they be considered to be in an employer/employee relationship. If these members are independent, how can the organisation be deemed to exercise control over what they do? The application of control would be tenuous at best. Furthermore, as previously indicated the majority of people holding these positions are not remunerated, thus it is extremely difficult to demonstrate or even assert an employee/ employer relationship.

Obviously the clear and unequivocal manner of dealing with the issue is to enforce the signing of confidentiality agreements for all members of the AEC who are outside of an employment arrangement with the organisation on whose committee they sit. This would have the effect of rendering the individuals responsible and liable for any breach that may occur in their conduct, but similarly it would leave the organisation and the AEC system open to the criticism that it is stifling the freedom of discussion. It would in effect be reasonably portrayed as being less transparent than a system that does not seek or enforce the signing of confidentiality agreements.

Monitoring:

The difficulty of assuring adherence and compliance with approvals is certainly not restricted to external commercial organisations. However where issues of monitoring progress and outcomes for "commercial – in – confidence" work that is being done in secured facilities external to and outside the control of an Institution and therefore potentially it's AEC arise, these issues maybe more apparent. Equally compelling is any application which has the potential to attract adverse publicity or reaction in the broader community, because this potentially places the entire AEC approval system in a bad light and reflects poorly on both the approving AEC and it's parent organisation. Yet neither may have the ability to initiate remedial action or take steps to investigate the misinformation being peddled into the broader community, or even ascertain if any breach of an approval has occurred. This can and does lead to frustration with respect to the ability to control the situation and thus influence the outcome, for very often these events take on a life of their own where rationality is not necessary the bedrock upon which events are constructed.

AEC Procedural Operations and Application Turnaround Times:

An important procedural question, particularly from the investigator's perspective is the issue of timeliness and more specifically, the time required for an AEC to approve, modify or reject a proposal. It can be the major determining factor when the decision is made about where the work is to be undertaken and by whom as any contract research organization that cannot delver results in a timely manner is unlikely to be engaged by a company requiring product or safety testing. In the environment of what is clearly a very competitive market, it is essential that the AEC is sufficiently flexible in its procedural operations to allow it to deal with applications in an expeditious manner, without risking or compromising the principles under which it operates or even its integrity. Clearly, this is a very difficult balancing act with the potential for any company wanting to undertake such a study to suffer loss of revenue and market opportunities versus the potential risks to the reputation of the institution whose AEC is considering the application. If an appropriate mechanism for expeditiously handling proposals submitted to an AEC by external / commercial bodies is developed, most institutions would reasonably expect that this facility would also have to be made available to all potential applicants to that AEC, otherwise there would be the potential for further conflict to develop that could affect the standing of the AEC both within the parent institution and in the broader community. This obviously means that any mechanism for assessing applications out of formal session be fully compliant

with the letter and spirit of the Code of Practice, which is by necessity set out in a way that tries to guarantee a full and balanced consideration of all proposals. Equally, external applicants to an AEC must remain aware of the need for members to take adequate time to fully consider and if required, orchestrate modifications to any submitted protocol, even when time to approval is a critical factor. The ability of any organisation to meet the needs of clients is paramount and the adverse impact on any organisation's reputation that fails to do so should not be underestimated. This does not imply any diminution of the importance of the factors to be considered when determining if an application should be approved, amended or declined, only that it must be done in a manner that is conscious of the time-lines of the contracting parties. As in many operations, bureaucracy should not impinge on the ability to get things done, rather it should facilitate the attainment of goals to the highest standard.

Conclusion:

The current system works, and I believe it does work, because of the goodwill and common sense of all AEC members. However, what works now and has worked in the past may not necessarily be the model by which all future operations and deliberations take place. The increasing availability of, and dependence on, commercial funding and the resulting reliance on contractual arrangements governing various aspects such as intellectual property which may arise as a result of undertaking such work, places the deliberations of an AEC in a different context. It is no longer a purely academic institution in pursuit of knowledge for the benefit of humankind it is now intimately entwined with commerce and will therefore be seen as explicitly pursuing both better health outcomes and a return on the investment for those that provided the capital in the first place. Any new arrangements would therefore require consideration of all appropriate models with the need to protect the organisations involved and the results of adverse outcomes as a consequence of loose tongues being an important aspect of such considerations.

It is acknowledged that the requirement for confidentiality and privacy of information is a growing concern but in our context where we have striven for increased transparency it has the potential to be portrayed in an extremely negative light. This perception would not be altered by the fact that the organisations concerned were merely trying to uphold their contractual obligations rather than suppress the information *per se*. Primarily, the ownership of any and all information derived as a consequence of undertaking these experiments would be determined contractually, but it clearly belongs to the organisations involved in the contractual relationship not in the public domain.

Having said this I do not wish for it to be used as an excuse to abort the drive for greater transparency and openness in the process but neither do I wish the information to be used to embarrass or damage companies or individuals. I will leave it to you to consider the relative merits of the different sides of each argument and you as individuals need to reconcile the different imperatives but I stress that in doing so there are two sides that need to be considered and any outcome must represent a balance between these two imperatives that reflects the best outcome for our society.

This paper was presented at the ANZCCART Workshop "Reviewing Proposals from External Organizations" that was held in Brisbane on the 27th and 28th of March this year.

Letter to the Editor

Dear ANZCCART News,

I was a member of the NSW Animal Research Review Panel (ARRP) from 2003 until 2005. During that period I personally witnessed, and was privy to, a number of things I found gravely concerning. However, the issue I would like to draw your readers' attention to at present is the practice of government inspectors advising research institutions of their intention to conduct an inspection well in advance of the inspection date.

In 2005 I spoke about animal research policy at a conference hosted by Melbourne University. After presenting my paper I had a number of informal discussions with interested parties, including an individual involved with human ethics committees. When I told him that inspections in NSW are announced his response was 'well you may as well not bother.'

I note that in the United Kingdom, the Home Office records on its web site that in 2004 government inspectors undertook 2,682 inspections of research facilities with 'the majority of them unannounced' (http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/about-us/news/inspectorate-animals). It seems to me, as a matter of basic logic, that unannounced inspections would be more likely to readily identify animal welfare concerns. I also feel that Australian authorities should be capable of conducting spot inspections if another country is already successfully using such a model. Although the UK regulatory system is different to the Australian system in significant ways, my experience on ARRP suggests that with sufficient political will, spot inspections are entirely possible.

My reason for writing this letter, therefore, is to flag to members of the animal welfare community that I believe the matter of scheduled animal research inspections is a significant welfare concern and a matter I think needs addressing as a priority. I accept that it may not be possible to carry out spot inspections of Animal Ethics Committees, but I do not see any reason why we should not be moving towards a spot inspection model for research facilities. I would therefore invite comment from members of the animal welfare community about this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

Siobhan O'Sullivan
Government and International Relations
The University of Sydney
and
Animals in Research Division Representative
Animals Australia

Editor's Response

I was in the UK earlier this year discussing various issues with representatives of the Home Office and researchers, and the issue of inspections came up. The Home Office Inspectors were very proud (perhaps justifiably) of their random inspection procedures. Discussing the benefits of random Home Office inspections with researchers did however provide an interesting perspective as most seem comfortable with the system of random inspections - and their ability to predict the timing of such inspections to "within a few days".

A totally separate issue was the varying frequency with which such inspections occur with "the best" facilities being inspected roughly once each month and more problematic facilities virtually having a representative of the Home Office located on - site while problems were being addressed.

One cannot help but wonder if we might ever see the day when Australian AEC's and State Government regulators are sufficiently well resourced to even contemplate such a system.

Staff Changes at ANZCCART

Those of you, who received emails about or actually attended the recent ANZCCART conference in Canberra, would have noticed that there has been yet another change in staff at ANZCCART. Julie Nixon left ANZCCART immediately after the Annual General Meeting in March to take up a senior administrative position at Flinders University in Adelaide and Chris Wadey has now stepped into that position at ANZCCART.

Chris started here in June and found herself in the middle of the busy lead up to the Canberra meeting and quickly demonstrated her excellent organizational skills and was an integral part of the success of our conference. We look forward to her being a key member of staff at ANZCCART for years to come.

Revision of the ANZCCART publication "Euthanasia of Animals used for Scientific Purposes".

Since this booklet was first published, it has been regarded as the "gold standard" by which Animal Ethics Committees judge the content of applications they assess and widely cited as one of the authoritative works in this area around the world. The current (second) edition was published in 2001 and a number of things have changed since that time, such as the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (now in its 7th edition) and the availability of some reagents cited in this text. Accordingly, ANZCCART is planning a revision of the text and will publish the third edition of Euthanasia of Animals used for Scientific Purposes in 2007.

As part of the process of revising or if necessary expanding the text, we welcome comments from all interested parties. Please use this opportunity to bring to our attention your ideas that may address particular areas in need of revision or preservation and please feel free to highlight what you see as strengths, weaknesses, omissions or areas where you feel the current edition is not adequate to address questions or issues relevant to your work or your interests.

Your ideas and suggestions can be emailed to us at ANZCCART@adelaide.edu.au and we would like to receive them by the end of November, 2006.

Strategic Review of ANZCCART and our Role

Next year will mark the 20th Anniversary of the setting up of ACCART, which later expanded to include the interests of New Zealand researchers and became know as ANZCCART. Rather than spending too much time dwelling on what ANZCCART has been able to do during those 20 years, we would rather use this opportunity to take stock and concentrate on where ANZCCART should go and what we want to achieve during the next 20 years.

Accordingly, we are offering everyone the opportunity to have a say in setting the ANZCCART agenda for the future. So, if you think there are problems that we can look at, areas where more or better advice is required, workshops that you would like to see organised or issues that need to be discussed in the areas of animal experimentation, the ANZCCART Board of Management would like to offer this opportunity to provide feedback, advice, constructive criticisms or suggestions about what we do and how we do it. This may range from topics for future FACT sheets through to suggestions for future workshops and conferences.

Please take this opportunity to help ensure that ANZCCART remains relevant and a useful resource for you and your colleagues well into the future by emailing us at ANZCCART@adelaide.edu.au anytime during the next few months.

Awards & Scholarships

Intervet Dieter Lütticken Award
Intervet's award to reduce the number of animals used in testing for development and production of animal veterinary medicines

Boxmeer, May 2006 – Intervet International bv offers the Dieter Lütticken award to promote scientists or life science research institutions working in research areas that serve the 3R-concept i.e. reducing, refining or replacing the use of animals in testing for development and production of veterinary medicines. The total funding for the award is 20,000 Euro. Application deadline is 30/09/2006.

This international award, established in 2004, will be given to scientists or public institutions that have delivered excellent contributions to the 3R's for the development and production of veterinary medicinal products. Work regarding contribution to the 3R's preferably should have been documented by a publication within the past two years. The award scope covers in vitro models used in R&D which replace animal testing for licensing purposes as well as studies avoiding the use of animals in efficacy, safety and quality testing in the production of biologicals and pharmaceuticals for animals.

Intervet would like to see the scope interpreted as broadly as possible. It can cover, for example, residue testing, new toxicological methods, challenging test replacements, epidemiological studies focusing on the correlation of field data and protection of animals by vaccination, new epitope identification, genomics, proteomics, alternatives to production methods using animal by-products or animals.

The applications will initially be screened by Intervet at the country level by a selection team consisting of an Intervet representative, a clinician and a public research centre representative. The judgment laid down in an expert report will form the basis for the final selection of candidates from the different regions.

In 2004 this award was given to Prof. Andrew Hemphill, University of Bern, Institute of Parasitology, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine for his work in the development and evaluation of in vitro approaches for culture and investigation of helminthic and protozoan parasites. No suitable applications for this award were, however, received in 2005.

The award is named after Dieter Lütticken. Dieter Lütticken, committed to research in microbiology and virology, contributed to Intervet research and development for more than a quarter of a century. With his ambition, creativity and broad knowledge in basic and applied science he guided and shaped Intervet's R&D for many years. He established what became tradition – Intervet's sound support and close collaboration with basic research. Dieter Lütticken retired in June 2003 from his position as Vice-President and Intervet's Head of R&D.

Intervet welcomes submissions from all life-science research institutions. Commercial organizations are excluded. This year's deadline is September 30, 2006.

InterNICHE Humane Education Award Invests in New Alternatives Worldwide

Eight exciting projects submitted to the InterNICHE Humane Education Award have now been chosen for their positive pedagogical and ethiocal impact on life science education.

The Award is an international grant program to support initiatives that can enhance veterinary, medical and biological science education by replacing harmful animal use with progressive alternative methods.

Sponsored by the Dutch anti - vivisection organisation Proefdiervrij, 20,000 Euro will now be shared between the following successful applicants to support their innovative projects:

* Dr. Fawzy Elnady from the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Cairo University in Egypt, who will create the world's first camel anatomy software to enhance veterinary teaching and replace the killing of camels

in north African, Middle Eastern and central Asian countries. In keeping with the InterNICHE Policy (1), the software will be created using the cadaver of a camel that has died naturally or been euthanised secondary to serious non-recoverable injury or terminal illness. 1000 copies of the Arabic/English software will be distributed. The new learning tool will also be freeware, thereby optimising the potential for widespread replacement.

* Dr Dmitriy Slyusarenko from the Zooveterinary Institute in Kharkiv, Ukraine, whose project will directly replace surgery labs on live animals with an innovative cadaver-based alternative. Instead of catching and practicing on healthy stray dogs and cats which are then either killed or released with injuries, ethically sourced animal cadavers and Aboud's Method (2) of perfusing cadavers for 'live' surgery practice will be implemented. Students will be offered fully ethical learning opportunities that provide a greater degree of freedom to achieve genuine mastery in surgical training through repeated and highly realistic practice. Syrian neurosurgeon Dr Emad Aboud will advise on the establishment of the model.

* Dr Armen Vardapetyan from Yerevan State University in Armenia, who will implement software alternatives and new hardware to achieve replacement in zoology practical classes and establish a multimedia learning environment. The project will begin with frog anatomy alternatives but it is envisaged that the curricular transformation will lead to full replacement of all vertebrate use. This modernisation of the curriculum and teaching process locally will be complemented by promotion of alternatives and sharing of experience at other universities and ethics committees nationally.

* Dr Lili Duda from the University of Pennsylvania in the USA, who will expand the existing but small-scale body donation program (Educational Memorial Program) for ethically sourced cadavers at the School of Veterinary Medicine. The expanded program will provide an alternative track in surgery practical classes for conscientiously objecting students. An investigation into better preservation and storage techniques, and distribution of informational brochures to educate clients of the teaching hospital and the wider faculty, will also be undertaken.

* Dr. Julia Maria Matera from the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of São Paulo in Brazil, who will investigate techniques for improving the preservation of cadavers used for surgery practice, with a special focus on tropical climates and chemical preservation of abdominal organs. The animal cadavers used in the project will be ethically sourced, as defined by the InterNICHE Policy (1), using a body donation program already established in the teaching hospital. Replacement of live animal use already achieved has been well received by students and has provided a better learning environment for surgical skills acquisition.

* Dr Gabriel Cotor from the Veterinary Faculty in Bucuresti, Romania, who will introduce student self-experimentation using the advanced Biopac Student Lab. Following widespread replacement with software and a multimedia lab in recent years, the new apparatus will replace the majority of remaining invasive experiments within physiology teaching. A wide range of practicals are possible with the computer- linked apparatus, which has strong advantages over the animal labs for illustrating physiological principles.

* Dr Marta Saloña-Bordas from Department of Zoology & Animal Cell Biology at the University of the Basque Country, who will develop a free-access on-line invertebrate anatomy resource in Spanish for replacement of zoology practical classes that use killed invertebrates. The project will dovetail with existing efforts for e- learning and for reduction of harmful animal use. The sourcing of the invertebrates will also be in keeping with the InterNICHE Policy, and will provide a humane alternative for students and teachers concerned about wild collection of invertebrates and maintaining the ecological balance.

* Dr Aleksander Ivanc from the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics at the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia & Herzegovina, who will introduce a range of physiology video and software alternatives to provide new tools for practical classes. Translation on paper will facilitate effective implementation of the alternatives, and appropriate testing and assessment of student performance with the new methods will also be undertaken. The project will replace the annual use of over 500 frogs, rats and snails, a significant reduction of harmful animal use.

For more information, please see www.interniche.org

(1) Policy on the Use of Animals and Alternatives in Education. In Jukes N., Chiuia M. *From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse: Alternative Methods for a Progressive, Humane Education*, 2nd ed. Leicester, UK: InterNICHE, 2003. Updated Version 2b available at www.interniche.org/policy.htm

(2) Aboud E. et al. New Alternative to Animal Models for Surgical Training. ATLA 32, Supplement 1, 501-507, 2004. See also *Conference on-line*. InterNICHE, 2005.

www.interniche.org/2005conference/online.html

Please note the new address for InterNICHE

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AAWS Update

Hopefully by now, everyone will be aware of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) which has been introduced to ensure the protection of all sentient animals in Australia by developing, adopting and promoting sound standards and practices in all situations where humans and animals interact.

Under the strategy, human / animal interactions have been divided into six broad categories as a way of improving the efficiency of implementing the AAWS. These categories are:

- Livestock & production animals
- Animals used for work, sport, recreation or display
- Companion animals
- Aquatic animals, and
- Animals used in research and teaching

As a part of the government's efforts to implement AAWS as quickly and effectively as possible, there is a need to find out exactly what is currently in place around the country (and it does vary significantly between different States and Territories). So, for those of you who have already been contacted and passed on information about what is happening in the research and Teaching sector in particular – Thank you. To those of you who have not yet been contacted but are aware of local policy differences, practices or guidelines that effect the use of animals in research and teaching and you think might be worth bringing to the attention of the Federal Government, I would urge you to pass this information on as soon as possible. It can be submitted via ANZCCART at our email address ANZCCART@adelaide.edu.au – preferably before the next National Planning Workshop which will be held in mid October 2006.

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is free of charge and is published by the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching Limited.

It is a publication for researchers and teachers; members of Animal Ethics Committees; staff of organisations concerned with research, teaching and funding; and parliamentarians and members of the public with interests in the conduct of animal-based research and teaching and the welfare of animals used.

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ISSN 1039-9089