

ANIMALS IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH (Update 2000)

The CMA believes that advancement of knowledge and improvements in health care are vitally dependent on biomedical research, involving the use of animals when necessary. Therefore CMA recommends that all research institutions in Canada be urged to participate fully in the program of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) and that the CCAC Certificate of Good Animal Practice® be a prerequisite for the awarding of funds to recipient institutions.

Canada has an advanced system of monitoring the use of animals in research, teaching and testing and is frequently used as a prototype by other countries. The CMA believes that the use of animals in biomedical research is absolutely essential but that there must be strict policies to ensure humane treatment of the animals. Concomitantly, there is a need for continued exploration of alternative research models.

In 1968 the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) was formed to develop a surveillance program for the care and use of research animals. The CCAC is an autonomous advisory and supervisory body financially supported by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and carries out its responsibilities for oversight of institutional animal care through a nationwide Voluntary Assessment Program. The primary objective of the CCAC is to ensure the provision of humane care and treatment, the reduction of pain and discomfort, and the avoidance of unnecessary use of research animals.

Most major advances in medical science have been based on knowledge gained through research with animals. Some significant examples are the development of insulin and vaccines for numerous diseases including poliomyelitis, improved treatments for heart conditions, advanced management for high blood pressure, transplantation procedures, kidney dialysis and joint replacements. Currently, biomedical researchers are using animals in their search for treatment methods for many other problems. As substitutes for humans, animals are vital in this research activity.

The CMA recognizes a need to balance scientific needs and animal welfare. It encourages all provinces to ensure the protection of research animals by requiring funding and research institutions to abide by the most current CCAC policies and guidelines.

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