

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH TEXAS VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
7400 Merton Minter Boulevard
San Antonio, Texas 78229-4404

RESEARCH SERVICE
MEMORANDUM NO. 08-11

January 8, 2008

ANIMAL CARE AND USE PROGRAM

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

1. PURPOSE: To provide policy and procedures for the operation of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

2. POLICY:

a. The Veterans Health Administration Office of Research and Development (ORD) is responsible for establishing policy for laboratory animal use in the VA System. Local medical centers are responsible for ensuring proper oversight and care for research animals housed at VA or purchased with VA funds. The Director is the institutional official responsible for ensuring that the animal research program complies with federal regulations and guidelines that govern animal research and is the point of contact for correspondence with USDA, PHS, and AAALAC. The IACUC will function in accordance with guidelines provided by the ORD and assure compliance with other regulatory guidelines affecting animal research, e.g., PHS policy, Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, USDA Animal Welfare Act requirements.

b. The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), functions as a subcommittee of and reports to the Research and Development Committee for the South Texas Veterans Health Care System.

c. The use of animals in VA research is a privilege granted with the understanding and expectation that such research will be conducted according to the highest ethical and legal standards. The basic principles governing animal research in the VA, to guide the IACUC, are as follows:

- (1) The fewest number of animals needed to achieve scientific objectives should be used.
- (2) The least sentient species that will permit the attainment of research objectives should be used.
- (3) The least painful or distressful procedures needed to meet research objectives should be used.
- (4) All reasonable measures to minimize pain and distress to animals should be utilized.
- (5) The principles of replacement, reduction, and refinement should always be considered when planning and conducting studies.
- (6) Procedures that would be considered painful in a human should be considered painful in an animal.

3. PROCEDURES:

a. Membership. The STVHCS Director shall appoint members of the IACUC upon recommendation from the IACUC and the R&D Committee. The committee shall consist of not less than five voting members and shall include as a minimum one Veterinary Medical Consultant (ex officio) with laboratory animal experience, one practicing scientist experienced in research involving animals, one non-scientific member, and one individual not affiliated with the STVHCS. Members shall serve three-year terms. The Administrative Officer for Research and Development and the Supervisor of the

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Veterinary Medical Unit shall serve as ex officio non-voting members in an advisory capacity. IACUC chairs shall serve one-year appointments. Chairs may not simultaneously chair another subcommittee and should be a more senior scientist with animal research experience.

(1) Meetings. Meetings will be held monthly as needed. unless an alternate date is agreed upon. Members unable to attend should promptly notify the Research Office and send their protocol review comments to be provided the committee.

(2). Quorum. A quorum (greater than 50% of voting members) will be required to conduct business. A member having a scientific, monetary, or personal conflict of interest for a protocol may provide information requested by the IACUC prior to deliberations, but must excuse himself once deliberations begin.

(3) Minutes. Minutes will be maintained, documenting actions taken, members present and times of recusal, and vote record. Minutes will be forwarded to the R&D Committee for review.

b. Functions.

(1) Research Proposal Review. The IACUC must review and approve, require modifications to, or withhold approval of all research proposals when the animal research is supported by VA funds and/or conducted on VA premises. The IACUC must assure protocol meets all animal regulatory guidelines.

(a) The Veterinary Medical Officer or Consultant must perform a veterinary consult with the investigator prior to submission of the proposal.

(b) All proposals and modifications will be reviewed by the full committee. Each new protocol will be assigned to two voting committee members, termed primary and secondary reviewers, who are expected to lead a discussion of the protocol.

(c) The VA Animal Component must be used for review of applications being submitted to the VA for funding. If a proposal has been approved by the UTHSCSA IACUC, indicating it is being done at the VA, but is not seeking VA funding, the VA IACUC may accept the final approved version of the UTHSCSA animal form for review, but may require additional information.

(d) The IACUC will advise the investigator in writing of its actions, to include any stipulations to be met prior to IACUC approval.

(e) No animal work may begin until after IACUC and R&D Committee approvals are received.

(2) Annual Review of Proposals. The IACUC must review the conduct of all animal protocols annually. The funding period of a project has no bearing on the need for annual reviews and triennial reviews. Protocols originally approved based on UTHSCSA approved form must also provide the latest UTHSCSA continuing review approval to confirm active UTHSCSA status

(a) At the first and second anniversaries, the IACUC may review a standard form giving current basic information, such as IACUC approval number, IACUC approval date, title of project, species used, whether animal use is ongoing or to be terminated, and any proposed changes.

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Modification requests with amended Animal Component must be submitted with the form for IACUC review and approval of any change.

(b) Third Annual Review. Prior to the third anniversary, the IACUC must conduct a complete re-review of the protocol. This will be accomplished by having the investigator to submit a new protocol utilizing the latest version of the protocol form.

(3) Semiannual Program Review and Semiannual Facility Inspection. The IACUC must conduct a self-assessment review of the program for animal care and use every six months. An inspection of all animal facilities and investigator areas used for animal procedures or housing longer than 12 hours must also be conducted every six months. At least three voting members (including the veterinarian) must conduct the review and inspection. The VA assessment form designated by the VA Central Office Chief Veterinary Officer will be used to document the IACUC's program review and inspection. The report will identify any significant deficiencies (a deficiency that is a threat to the health or safety of the animals). The VA IACUC will accept and review as an IACUC business item the UTHSCSA IACUC semi-annual self-assessment in lieu of sending a VA IACUC team to the university. The IACUC chair, Veterinary Medical Consultant, and one or more research administrators will meet with the hospital director to present the report for his review. The report is submitted through the Hospital Director/Institutional Official to the Chief Veterinary Medical Officer.

c. Suspension of Projects. The IACUC may suspend an activity that it previously approved if it determines that the activity is not being conducted in accordance with the description of that activity provided by the Principal Investigator and approved by the IACUC. The IACUC may suspend an activity only after review of the matter at a properly-convened IACUC meeting and with the suspension vote by a majority of the quorum.

d. Allegations of Improper Animal Care or Use. All allegations of improper animal care and use must be reviewed promptly by the IACUC, and investigated if warranted. A written report of the review or investigation needs to be approved by a majority of a convened IACUC quorum and sent to the Director through the ACOS for R&D. If preliminary findings suggest that an allegation represents a reportable deficiency, i.e., any serious or continuing non-compliance with PHS policy, suspensions of protocols, or failure to correct a significant deficiency, the appropriate agencies will be contacted.

4. REFERENCES: VHA Handbook 1200.7, May 27, 2005.

5. RESCISSIONS: Research Service Memorandum 06-11, May 25, 2006.



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