Case Studies: Use of Animals in Biomedical Experimentation

From: *Scientific Integrity: Text and Cases in Responsible Conduct of Research* by Francis L. Macrina

6.3 You are a graduate student in behavioral pharmacology and your lab is conducting a drug discrimination study, an operant procedure in which rats are trained to identify drugs with stimulus properties similar to those of a training drug. The primary goal of the present study is to test several experimental compounds for their similarity to clozapine, an important treatment for schizophrenia. The compounds to be tested have been sent to your advisor as part of a contract awarded from a drug company. The generalization testing portion of the study is nearing completion, with only one dose-response curve left to obtain. During routine feeding, you notice that 8 of the 10 animals in the study have developed tumorlike growths at the site of injection on the stomach. Additionally, these animals have begun losing weight. Finally, you note that the animals do not exhibit any behaviors suggesting that they are experiencing discomfort. Concerned, you mention the growths and weight loss to your advisor, who instructs you to continue with generalizations testing. He is concerned that having to train a new set of animals in order to test one drug would waste large amounts of research time and resources and may cause problems in interpreting the results. He further states that the animals will be euthanized as soon as the testing phase of the study is completed in less than a month and the animals will be fine until then. Is your advisor's suggested course of action legally and ethically appropriate? What are your obligations in this situation?

6.5 You are the head of the legal office at a large state-supported university. The university has received a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the names of the individuals serving on the IACUC. The requestor is a science writer for a local newspaper. Your state has a broad-reaching FOIA law, but requests for information can be denied if appropriately justified. The university's unwritten policy has been to hold the IACUC roster in confidence owing to threats and acts of violence toward animal research activities and researchers in this country and abroad. At a staff meeting, one of your lawyers argues that the request be denied for these very reasons. But two other of your legal staff recommend releasing the roster. They argue that most of the animal research at the university is supported by public funds and therefore the roster should be considered public information. One of them further argues that if the request is denied, the newspaper will "go public" with its failure to get the list and this will create negative publicity, perhaps leading to a costly legal fight. Further, both of these staff members say that failing to honor the request will appear as though the university has "something to hide." The university president is pressing for your recommendation. Do you advise her to honor the FOIA request and release the names of the IACUC members to the public?

6.7 You are a member of your institution's IACUC. A protocol is submitted in which a researcher plans to perform footpad injections in mice using an antigen in complete Freund's adjuvant (CFA) to boost the antibody response. The IACUC used to approve protocols using CFA, but in recent years such use has been denied because of the pain and irritation it causes the mice. The IACUC denies the investigator permission to use CFA. The investigator appeals, arguing that she has just arrived from an institution that allows the use of CFA and she has years of data using the adjuvant. She maintains that she must continue its use so that she is able to make valid comparisons between her old and new studies. How would you respond?