

## Leukaemia Foundation

### Position Statement: Research involving animals

#### Summary

The Leukaemia Foundation acknowledges that there is a great deal of community concern regarding the use of animals for scientific (including medical research) purposes. The perceived or actual pain, distress and suffering experienced by animals during the course of a research study has been the subject of much public debate over recent years.

The Leukaemia Foundation does not support the indiscriminate or unethical use of non-human animals in experimentation. If any of our research funds are used in research which involves animals, the research must comply with all the requirements of the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*. The Leukaemia Foundation believes that for both ethical and practical reasons, animals used for scientific purposes must be used and cared for in an ethical and humane way and animals should only be used if important results cannot be obtained in any other way, and when the benefits of the study outweigh the potential adverse consequences of the study on the animal's welfare<sup>1</sup>. In addition, every effort should be made to promote the welfare and wellbeing of animals used in research and to minimising any pain, distress or suffering that might be experienced by the animals at any point in the study.

#### Background - why use animals in research?

Without animals, most of the major scientific and medical advances of the last century would not have been possible. For example, many life-saving drugs such as insulin, antibiotics, vaccines, anti-rejection (transplant), drugs and many anti-cancer treatments were all developed using knowledge gained from animal studies.

Research involving animals has also contributed significantly to the development of effective cures and treatments for serious and life threatening diseases like blood and bone marrow cancers. These days, most research into these conditions does not involve animals. Instead, tissue culture, computer modelling and other alternatives are more commonly used. In some situations however, animals are still needed to obtain important knowledge that could help save lives.

#### How are animals protected?

Research involving animals is highly regulated in Australia, and in many countries overseas. Strict guidelines<sup>1</sup> and enforceable legislation<sup>2</sup> exist to protect the welfare of animals used for scientific purposes and to ensure that animals

are used and cared for in an ethical and humane way. For studies involving animals to be approved in Australia, scientists must first justify their use to an independent animals ethics committee (AEC). They must also provide detailed information about when, how and why the animals are to be used, and how they are to be cared for before, during and after the study. In particular, scientists are required to detail the steps that will be taken to ensure appropriate and compassionate care of the animals, preventing and minimising any potential pain, distress or suffering imposed on animals at all points during the course of the study. They must also comply with specified monitoring the reporting procedures.

Apart from the obvious ethical considerations, promoting the welfare and wellbeing of animals is generally considered as essential to the overall success of a research study. The physical effects, for example, of improper treatment of an animal could compromise the validity (truth) of the study results, and therefore their usefulness afterwards<sup>3</sup>.

***General principles for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes<sup>1</sup>***

**Justification:** *Animals should only be used when important results cannot be obtained in any other way, and when the benefits of the study outweigh the potential adverse consequences of the study on the animal's welfare.*

**Responsibilities:** *Researchers and all those involved in the use of animals in research must take responsibility for all matters relating to the welfare of the animals. An obligation exists to treat the animals with respect and consider their welfare as an essential factor when planning or conducting research studies.*

**Replacement:** **Techniques that totally or partially replace animals in research must be sought and used wherever possible.**

**Reduction:** **Studies should be designed to use as few animals as possible to collect valid and meaningful scientific data. All efforts should be made to reduce the suffering of individual animals used in a research study.**

**Refinement:** **Research studies should be designed to prevent or minimise pain and distress in animals, taking into consideration the choice of animals, and species-specific requirements for feeding, housing, transportation and handling. Appropriate measures should be taken to assess and monitor adverse effects in animals and analgesics, anaesthetics and other drugs should be used appropriately.**

The Leukaemia Foundation funds cutting edge Australian research into the causes, treatment and care of people with leukaemias, lymphomas, myeloma and related blood disorders. At times this research will involve the use of animals. In evaluating applications for grants for funding research the Leukaemia Foundation ensures that applicants attend to all important ethical issues, including those surrounding the use of animals in research. The Leukaemia Foundation is satisfied that the research it funds adheres to the strict guidelines and legislation for research involving animals.

For more information about Australian guidelines on research involving animals visit the NHMRC at <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/ethics/animal/issues/index.htm>

### References

1. *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* 7<sup>th</sup> Edition 2004 National Health and Medical Research Committee's (NHMRC), Australian Government Canberra. Available URL:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/files/ea16.pdf>

2. AustLII Data base (Australian State and Territory legislation to protect the welfare of animals) Available URL:

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/database.html#act>

3. Draft - Minimising pain, distress and suffering in animals in research 2006 National Health and Medical Research Committee's (NHMRC), Australian Government Canberra. Available URL:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/ethics/animal/issues/index.htm>