

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RHEUMATOLOGY

POSITION STATEMENT

SUBJECT: Use of Animals in Biomedical Research

PRESENTED BY: Committee on Research, Committee on Rheumatologic Care

FOR DISTRIBUTION TO: Members of the American College of Rheumatology
Legislative and Regulatory Groups including Congress
Biomedical Research Institutions including NIH
Media Representatives
Medical Societies and Other Physician Groups

BACKGROUND:

The American College of Rheumatology is committed to the advancement of biomedical research and to developing knowledge for the improvement of health and the quality of human lives. Our mission includes the discovery of information that will lead to more effective means of diagnosis, treatment and cure of rheumatic disease. Achieving this mission may require the humane and responsible use of animals to address scientific questions. The American College of Rheumatology recognizes that the availability of drugs and devices developed through this research has led to improved health, longer lifespan, and more effective control of chronic disorders, such as arthritis and related diseases.

To assure the best possible science in accomplishing this goal, the American College of Rheumatology regards as necessary the use of animals in biomedical research and testing except in those cases where there are validated alternative techniques available. The American College of Rheumatology also recognizes the responsibility of the medical and scientific community to ensure that the care and use of animals in research and education are conducted in a judicious, responsible, and humane manner. It is the belief of the American College of Rheumatology that any effort to impose further restrictions on the use of live animals in biomedical and behavioral research and education would seriously compromise progress in health care and disease prevention.

Position:

1. The American College of Rheumatology supports the continued availability and humane use of live animals in scientific research and medical education.
2. Animal use is essential for the continued advancement of medical and veterinary research; adequate, practical and universally appropriate alternatives are not available.
3. Sustained progress is dependent on the appropriate use of animals in research, education, and the testing of substance, techniques, and equipment.

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4. Deterrence of appropriate use of animals for these purposes will impede the search for treatments, cures, and the prevention of disease and suffering afflicting both humans and animals.
 5. Use of animals in medical research and education should be humane and consistent with Federal guidelines, existing laws and regulations including the approval of local governing and regulatory bodies for the monitoring of the treatment of animals in research, e.g., Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).
 6. Animal experiments are to be undertaken with the sole purpose of advancing knowledge. Consideration should be given to the appropriateness of experimental procedures, species of animals used, and the minimal number required.
 7. Animals used for the purpose of laboratory research should receive every consideration for their comfort; they must be properly housed, fed, and their surroundings maintained in a sanitary condition.
 8. The imposition of further regulations and restrictions on the use of animals in research in the absence of evidence that such measures are necessary, and to the extent that the costs and space needed to conduct such research become prohibitive, must be avoided.

Approved by the Board of Directors: 11/97, 2/05, 8/08, 8/11

* Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, National Academy Press, National Research Council, Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources, Commission on Life Sciences; 1996.