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Basel Declaration

A call for more trust, transparency and communication on animal research

*Adopted on November 29, 2010 on the occasion of the first Basel conference
»Research at a Crossroads«*

Introduction

Over the last 100 years biomedical research has contributed substantially to our understanding of biological processes and thus to an increase in life expectancy and improvement in the quality of life of humans and animals. However, the list of challenges and new opportunities remains long.

1. Many physiological processes, such as learning and memory, remain to be understood.
2. For most of the 30,000 or so diseases affecting humans, available treatments only offer a relief of symptoms and do not address the causes.
3. The long-term impact of alterations in nutrition and work habits on human well-being and health is unknown and therefore in need of biomedical research.
4. New biomedical discoveries enable us to combat complex diseases such as dementia and cancer more effectively.
5. Deciphering the human genome and the genome of numerous animal species creates the basis for a better understanding of the causes of disease.
6. "Classical" infectious diseases that were once regarded as curable or even eradicated, such as tuberculosis, have re-emerged as a new threat, because they are now often resistant to treatment. Vaccines against many infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and hepatitis C, remain to be developed.
7. Today, pet animals are expected to have access to sophisticated medical care. This poses new challenges for veterinary medicine.
8. Biomedical research in particular cannot be separated into 'basic' and 'applied' research; it is a continuum stretching from studies of fundamental physiological processes to an understanding of the principles of disease and the development of therapies.

Without research using animals, it will not be possible to overcome the social and humanitarian challenges posed by these problems. Despite new and refined alternative methods, animal experiments will remain essential in the foreseeable future for biomedical research. Bearing this in mind, the participants of this conference subscribe to the following points.

Fundamental principles

We, the undersigned, shall:

1. Respect and protect the animals entrusted to us and not inflict unnecessary pain, suffering, or harm to them by adhering to highest standards of experimental design and animal care.
2. Consider carefully whether research involving animals addresses questions of importance that cannot be answered using alternative methods.
3. Strive to minimize the number of animals used for research and use the most suitable species to achieve the intended gain of knowledge.
4. Encourage collaboration to avoid repetition of animal experiments.
5. Implement the highest standards for protection of environment and public health.
6. Balance the interests of patients and society with our responsibility towards the animals when developing genetically modified animals.
7. Implement the highest standards of education and training for all persons who work with animals and monitor their compliance with standards on a regular basis.
8. Adequately recognize the important engagement of scientists in their efforts to promote the public understanding of science.
9. Promote the dialogue concerning animal welfare in research by transparent and fact-based communications to the public.
10. Provide advice based on scientific knowledge and expertise to political decision makers and government authorities on issues of research involving animals and their welfare.

We, the undersigned,

1. Stress that biomedical research cannot be separated into 'basic' and 'applied' research; it is rather a continuum stretching from studies of fundamental physiological processes to an understanding of the principles of disease and the development of therapies.
2. Encourage free and transparent communication to avoid unnecessary duplication of research.
3. Insist that necessary research involving animals, including non-human primates, be allowed now and in the future.
4. Ask that new laws and regulations only be introduced when they are the result of an objective, democratic discourse that is based on facts.
5. Request that society and lawmakers condemn the acts of radical groups that resort to unlawful means or violence against the research community under the pretense of animal protection.
6. Invite representatives of animal welfare organizations to discuss openly all important issues with the research community.
7. Encourage efforts to increase science education in public schools.
8. Ask opinion makers, the media and teachers to discuss sensitive issues concerning research involving animal research in an impartial manner and to promote a balanced dialogue with researchers.