Ethical (Animal Welfare) Considerations in Veterinary Publishing

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Animal welfare ethics; definition

problems with publishing material

1. general welfare & pain
   • experimental animals & study design
   • client animals receiving sub-optimal analgesics

2. professional ethics
   • client-owned animals on clinical trials receiving placebos
   • clients not being informed
Why am I here?

- Editor Journal of Veterinary Anaesthesia
- Editor Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia
- Anaesthetist
  - properly conducted pain studies
  - clinical studies
  - animal perspective
- President AVA
  - complaint management
- Member; AWSELVA
Why am I here? Case 1 1981

Experimental surgery in dogs in which d-tubo curarine was used as an “anaesthetic”

AVA committee complained by letter

AJVR – “mind your own business”

Richardson & Flecknell 2005
Laboratory Animals
1990-92 – 2000-02
2.7 – 19.8%
Publication of unethical (animal) material

- National
  - Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986
- Professional (RCVS)
- Institutional (animal care committee)
- Departmental
- Editorial
- Publisher
Editorial dilemma: no consensus on standards

Item 8; Helsinki Declaration 1967

“Reports of experimentation not in accordance with the principles laid down in this Declaration should not be accepted for publication”. 
Editorial dilemma; publishers guidelines

Editors should make clear the standards that they require. Authors' national standards for research practices (in human and animal studies) may be appropriate.

Client-owned animals lumbo-sacral extradural saline controls VAA rejected appeared later in leading UK veterinary Journal
Editorial dilemma; publishers guidelines

Editors should seek assurances that studies have been approved by relevant bodies (for example, institutional review board, research ethics committee, data and safety monitoring board, regulatory authorities including those overseeing animal experiments).

- PILs
- veracity of declaration?
- signed ACC certification?
- worth of ACC certification?
**Editorial dilemma; publishers guidelines**

Editors should *encourage peer reviewers to consider ethical issues raised by the research they are reviewing.* Editors should request additional information from authors if they feel this is required.

- *variably interpreted by different Journals*
- *identified by VAA readers*
Case 2: J. about *clinical veterinary medicine* 2006

analgesic study in rats ??????

untreated control group with excessive rescue thresholds

no new data

appallingly written

authors non-English speaking

editor – a veterinarian

handled “in house”
Case 3: top UK Veterinary Journal 2007

therapeutic surgery in cattle from leading European centre
grossly mis-reported analgesic technique
woefully inadequate analgesia technique
AVA condemned
letter exchange
PhD studentship
published in US later - unchallenged
Case 4: Prestigious UK Medical Journal 2007
MRI in primates with NMB

UK medical editor

European investigators

IACC approval • previous citations

Wrote to editor

Wrote to IACC
What now?

Committee on Publication Ethics: FAQ website

Ethical standards in Animal Research 1 “hit” (2001)

advice:

• a difficult area – currently no international convention

• the article could be published (with an editorial to stimulate discussion)

• debate on the subject well over-due
Questions

how much (well-meaning) interference is tolerable?

who should be approached; author; editor; publisher?

in trans-national submission’s, whose laws prevail?

which laws prevail? national or professional?

should ASPA(1986) embrace publication?

how should transgressing journals / editors be managed?

should there be a veterinary point (1 – 7) and a point 8?
Questions

recommendations must be universally applied

otherwise “ethical” journals will suffer