



EUROPEAN CANCER ORGANISATION

Review of Directive 86/609/EEC on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes

European Parliament Agriculture Committee

Vote on the Parish Report – 31 March 2009

Statement from the European CanCer Organisation

On Tuesday 31 March, the Agriculture Committee will take a crucial vote on this issue. ECCO accepts that many people have objections to the use of animals in scientific research, and that MEPs may wish to take a moral stance.

ECCO's primary mission is to improve human health, and to win the fight against cancer. We hope that MEPs will not forget this in their understandable desire to protect laboratory animals. We would like to point out that some of the contents of the revised Directive, as well as some amendments proposed by Committee members, could affect the lives of millions of European cancer patients in the years to come.

We are particularly concerned about two areas:

- the proposed restrictions of the use of non-human primates in medical research
- amendments which would severely limit, if not stop entirely, essential medical research by making the administrative procedures hugely cumbersome

Because non human primates are our nearest animal 'relation', their use in medical research is a difficult issue which raises considerable moral concerns. However, there are areas where their use is essential. The Directive proposal to limit the use of primates to research that "is undertaken with a view to the avoidance, prevention, diagnosis or treatment of life-threatening or debilitating clinical conditions in human beings" may prevent these animals being used in some areas of fundamental research where the primary aim is to gain new knowledge. It is not always possible to demonstrate the relevance of such knowledge to particular diseases or conditions at the time the work is proposed.

Perhaps most worrying of all are several amendments which, if passed, would raise the regulatory hurdles so high that it seems likely that essential research could be held up for years. Introducing such lengthy administrative procedures will not improve animal welfare, but will greatly affect European medical research. We are particularly concerned about amendment 311, proposed by Mr. Parish, which calls for all applications for research projects involving animals to be subject to public consultation, in order that regulatory authorities may have 'access to the widest range of views on which to base decisions.' While this may seem as though it will bring about a welcome increase in transparency, medical researchers know from



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experience that the vast majority of views transmitted will come through organised write-in campaigns from animal rights groups, and collecting and collating them all will add months to the already lengthy process of authorisation.

On behalf of European patients, doctors, and researchers, we ask you most sincerely to allow us to continue to work to reduce the burden of cancer and not to put unnecessary barriers in our way.

Alexander MM Eggermont
President