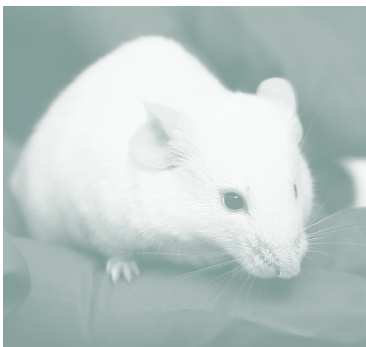


Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK

14 MAY 2014



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Foreword from Sir Mark Walport, Government Chief Scientific Adviser:

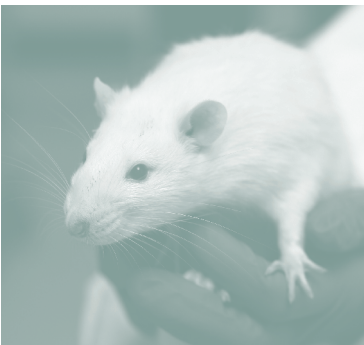
“The carefully regulated use of animals in scientific research remains a vital tool in improving our understanding of how biological systems work both in health and disease. It is essential to improving the health and lives of humans and animals.

“The public deserves to know why and how animals are used on its behalf in scientific, medical and veterinary research in the UK. I therefore welcome this Concordat, which commits its signatories to supporting clear, transparent and open communication and proactive public engagement on this subject.”

Mark Walport

Introduction

In October 2012, more than 40 organisations involved with life science in the UK signed a Declaration on Openness on Animal Research www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/policy/concordat-on-openness-on-animal-research/. They agreed to develop a Concordat that sets out how they will be more open about the ways in which they use animals in scientific, medical or veterinary research in the UK. Their objective was to ensure that members of the public have accurate and up-to-date information about what animal research involves and the role it plays in the overall process of scientific discovery and treatment development, how such research is regulated in the UK, and what researchers and animal care staff do to try to promote animal care and welfare, reduce animal usage and minimise suffering and harm to the animals. In summary, the signatories to this Concordat want people to be able to find out more about animal research so that they can debate the issues from a position of knowing the facts and make up their own minds about animal research.



The Concordat comprises four Commitments, each underpinned by practical steps that organisations can take. Exactly how the Commitments are fulfilled will differ between organisations depending upon their operation and purpose, their capacity and their different legal obligations. Research funders, organisations conducting animal research, and representative and membership bodies all have different roles to play. The Commitments are expected to be fulfilled by all signatories, but the practical steps taken to fulfil each Commitment will vary from organisation to organisation. While some signatories already have systems and structures in place to help them to fulfil the Commitments, and there are already many examples of good practice in openness on animal research, others may have some way to go to be able to take some of the practical steps outlined in the Concordat. But all signatories commit to making progress towards implementing the Concordat and helping to increase openness on the use of animals in research in the UK.

Signatories will report annually on their progress in each of the Commitments.

ACCESS TO ANIMAL RESEARCH FACILITIES IN THE UK

Several signatories to the Concordat allow access to their facilities for accredited journalists and media organisations, MPs, and local school, patient and community groups. Such visits allow people either to see for themselves, or find out via an article or television or radio programme, how animals are kept, cared for and used in UK research facilities. The public and media consider access to animal research

facilities to be very important for openness and these visits are therefore to be strongly encouraged.

There will sometimes be practical reasons why access may not be possible, and the Concordat therefore does not require any signatory to guarantee access to its facilities, but signatories are strongly encouraged to consider whether they can accommodate such visits.

Why we, the signatories, have developed this Concordat

Fundamental research using animals has helped us to understand the way the body works, and research using animals plays an essential role in medical, veterinary and scientific progress. To improve the health and welfare of humans and animals we need to continue carrying out scientific research. We are investing in developing alternatives, however for the foreseeable future an important part of this research will continue to require the use of animals.

The signatories to this Concordat are all involved in carrying out, funding or supporting animal research in some way. Public opinion surveys run by Ipsos MORI over the last fifteen years show that there is a relatively high level of public acceptance of research for medical benefit and we recognise that this is because many people trust us to carry out research using animals in a responsible way. The life science sector in the UK has long been committed to striving to maintain and continue to improve high standards of animal welfare as well as undertaking world-leading research. We recognise that we have an obligation to demonstrate and promote these values, and that to be seen as trustworthy we must be open, transparent, and accountable for the research that we conduct, fund or support, including when the high standards we strive for are not achieved. This means doing more to communicate the context in which animal research takes place; the work that organisations undertake in the 3Rs (the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of animals in research); the regulations that govern this research, and the systems that are in place to report and rectify poor practice. We believe that the Concordat will give its signatories the opportunity to come together to share and promote good practice in being open about animal research and in providing the public with better insights into the reasons for, methods of, and progress resulting from, the use of animals in research.

We recognise and respect the fact that some people are opposed to, or uncertain whether to support, the use of animals in research. For people to come to their own position on this issue we feel that they should be provided with clear and honest information on the benefits of the research to humans and animals, and any harms to the animals used in research. The Commitments in this Concordat will help to address this requirement.

Further background information is available at the end of this document.

Commitment 1: We will be clear about when, how and why we use animals in research

This Commitment seeks to ensure that all organisations acknowledge, both internally and externally, that they or their members carry out or fund animal research. It also seeks to ensure that they are transparent about the use of animals in that research. All signatories are expected to agree to these basic principles of openness, which underpin the whole of the Concordat.



- When we communicate about the use of animals in research, we should provide accurate descriptions of the benefits, harms and limitations of such research, be realistic about the potential outputs of such research, and be open about its impact on animal welfare and the ethical considerations involved.
- We will take steps to ensure that staff (and students, where relevant) are aware of our organisation's involvement with or support for the use of animals in research.
- We will be prepared to provide information explaining our involvement with the use of animals in research, and will be prepared to respond to reasonable enquiries about the nature of the animal research we support. Where there are reasons not to respond to enquiries we will explain those reasons to the enquirer.
- Where signatories to the Concordat are working together on a research project, all the relevant parties will agree to take an open approach to communications about the research and to support their partners in this. Where there are partnerships with non-signatory organisations or there are issues of confidentiality or commercial sensitivity, signatory organisations will be as open as possible in sharing information with the public while respecting these constraints.

Commitment 2: We will enhance our communications with the media and the public about our research using animals

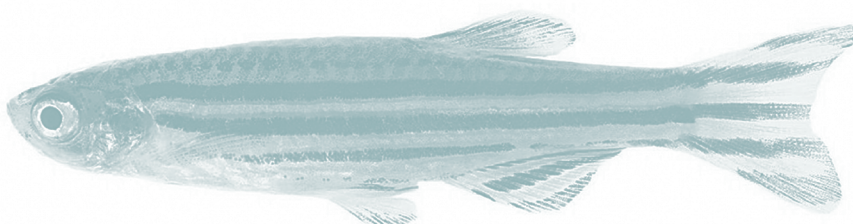
The purpose of this Commitment is to ensure that relevant details about signatories' involvement in the use of animals in research are readily accessible by the public. It builds on Commitment 1 by outlining some of the practical steps that organisations can take to facilitate their communications around animal research.

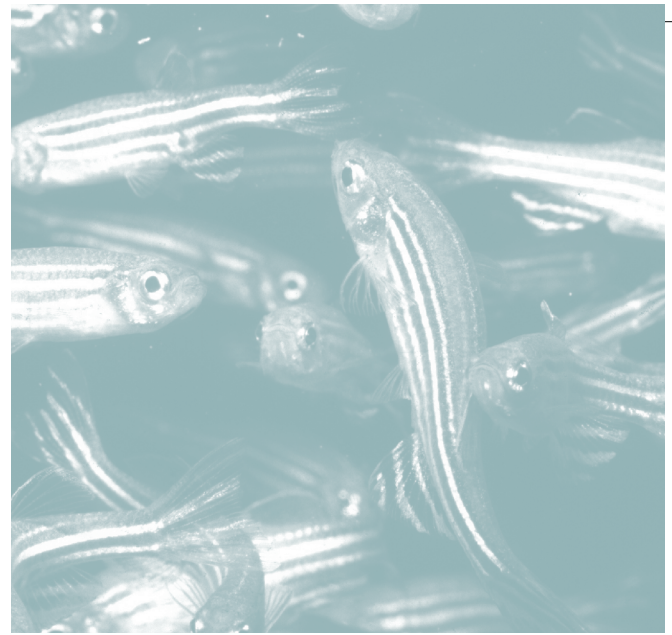
- Within one year of signing up to the Concordat we will make a policy statement about the use of animals in research available via our own websites, to provide clear information about the nature of our own involvement with animal research and its role in the wider context of our research aims, and link this to a central portal, publicly available on the Understanding Animal Research (UAR) website, or provide this information to UAR for inclusion in the portal.
- Where animal research has played a significant role in a scientific advancement and/or product development, we will include information about that animal research in relevant communications, including media releases.
- We will support and encourage researchers and staff who wish to engage with the media where this does not conflict with normal operational procedures.
- We will identify a point of contact for information about the organisation's involvement in the use of animals in research and will aim to provide one or more spokespeople to talk about this use.
- In order to help to ensure that information about the role of animal research in scientific advancements is available for the public to view in scientific journals, signatory universities, pharmaceutical companies, learned societies and research funders will encourage researchers to follow acknowledged good practice when publishing the results of their animal research (e.g. the principles enshrined in the ARRIVE guidelines).
- Signatory universities, pharmaceutical companies, learned societies and research funders will report and/or explain how they are working to promote better application of the 3Rs (Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of animals in research) and will make examples of their progress in the 3Rs publicly available.

Commitment 3: We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to find out about research using animals.

This Commitment aims to encourage more public discussion in the UK about animal research. It builds on Commitments 1 and 2 by suggesting ways in which signatories can engage proactively - directly and indirectly - with the public, over and above the provision of information.

- We will work cooperatively to provide more comprehensive explanations of animal research projects and procedures. These explanations could, where appropriate, include images and films; they could be presented either as stand-alone materials or accompanying other communications, such as media releases, and should include information about the context of the research.
- Where relevant, representatives of signatories will include information about the role of animals in any talks or public events they take part in, for example at schools or with the local community.
- Signatories will consider ways in which they can facilitate activities that will encourage public engagement with the issue of animals in scientific, veterinary and medical research.





Commitment 4: We will report on progress annually and share our experiences

Monitoring the implementation of the Concordat will be important for its success. We want to be able to demonstrate and share the progress we have made towards being more open about research using animals in the UK and improving the information that is available to the public. We will also review the Concordat and our own processes to keep them up to date.

- We will report to UAR annually on actions we have chosen to take in order to fulfil these Commitments and will share our experience of the effectiveness and impact of the strategies we have adopted.
- UAR will publish an annual update on progress on openness.
- Three years after publication, we will review this Concordat and its impact and amend the document as necessary.

Background information on the Concordat

HOW THE CONCORDAT WAS DEVELOPED

In developing this Concordat the original signatories to the Declaration established a process which involved consultation with a wider stakeholder group. This included public dialogue events in three UK locations; a workshop with representatives of the media, and discussions with animal welfare groups to find out what they expect from 'openness' and what access to information they expect the Concordat signatories to provide. A draft version of the Concordat was also available for comment during a six-week public consultation at the end of 2013. This document reflects the outcomes of these consultations. The public dialogue was conducted by Ipsos MORI, and a full report of the findings can be viewed here:

www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/openness-in-animal-research-dialogue/

The results of the public consultation can be found here:

www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/media-library/download/document/145/.

UK REGULATION

Animal research in the UK is regulated by the Animals in Science Regulation Unit of the Home Office (ASRU), which controls the licensing of animal research, regularly inspects all animal research establishments and reports on regulatory compliance. Each application for a project licence must include a summary of the research that will be carried out, written in language that non-specialists can understand. These non-technical summaries are publicly available on the Home Office website. The Home Office also requires every animal research establishment to submit information on their research each year, which is published in summary form in an annual report and detailed statistics.

The signatories to this Concordat operate under UK and EU law. This means that animals must not be used if alternative research methods are available that produce comparable data to those obtained from using animals in research; that the numbers used should be kept to a minimum necessary to conduct statistically robust research; and that researchers must ensure that any pain or distress, whether physical or psychological, is minimised. Each research project using animals must also pass a harm-benefit analysis before it is licensed. The harm caused to animals must be justified by the expected outcome of the research, taking into account ethical considerations and the expected benefit to humans, animals or the environment. We want the public to have accurate information on what we do to meet these requirements, and to have a realistic view of both the harms caused to animals and the benefits of animal research.

THE STATUS OF THE CONCORDAT

This Concordat has been developed proactively and is supported by its signatories in addition to their legal and regulatory obligations in the UK. Organisations that sign up to it are expected to work towards fulfilling the four Commitments. If an organisation finds that it is unable to make any progress, it will be asked to reconsider its position as a signatory to the Concordat.

All signatories agree to take steps to be more open about their use of animals in research. Further information is given in the accompanying Guidance Document to explain how different kinds of organisation could work towards fulfilling the Commitments. Exactly how these Commitments are fulfilled will differ between organisations depending upon their operation and purpose, their capacity and their different legal obligations. Research funders, organisations conducting animal research, and representative and membership bodies all have different roles to play. Some actions are expected to be fulfilled by all signatories, but others will depend on the primary role of the signatory.





Understanding Animal Research
Hodgkin Huxley House
30 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AW

www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk
020 3675 1230 office@uar.org.uk