Development of 3Rs Information Sources at the Animal Welfare Information Center

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Introduction

More than 30 years ago, Congress passed the Improved Standards for Laboratory Animals Act that requires scientists to “consider[s] alternatives to any procedure likely to produce pain to or distress in an experimental animal.” Senator Alfonse D’Amato (R-New York), co-sponsor of the bill, stated, “[This bill] encourages researchers to consider other research techniques which do not require the use of animals and to use less painful methods when animals must be involved. This type of encouragement will raise the consciousness of researchers. Because the individual researcher is ultimately responsible for his or her relationship to the animal, this aspect of the legislation is essential.”

The Animal Welfare Information Center (AWIC) was created by the new law to provide information on the 3Rs. While the primary sources of information are large bibliographic databases, a wonderful array of specialist databases and websites have been developed throughout the world. The downside to the explosion of information sources is that they are hard to find and the quality of information is not always appropriate for decision making by scientists seeking to incorporate new methods in their projects.

According to Professor Adrian Smith, Secretary of Norecopa, “3R Guide aims to be the leading global ‘one-stop shop’ for 3Rs resources, an ‘added value’ database with emphasis on peer-reviewed products (quality rather than quantity).” Below is a screenshot of the website.

Upcoming: On-line Workshop

The Animal Welfare Information Center online workshop provides an interactive environment where participants can learn about conducting literature searches, the history of animal welfare law and the specific responsibilities of researchers and IACUCs. Combining the expertise of the AWIC staff and the flexibility of self-paced learning, the online workshop meets the needs of researchers, librarians and IACUC members nationwide.

Upcoming: AWIC–Norecopa Database on 3Rs Methods

AWIC and Norecopa are currently developing a bibliographic database on 3Rs methods in research, teaching, and testing. Criteria are being developed to be used in the curation of bibliographic records that will form the 3Rs database. Initial efforts will focus on methods that can or have the potential to reduce animal numbers across a variety of research areas. Staff from the National Agricultural Library has been performing a preliminary analysis on linguistic clues for “animal use reduction” concept so that automated indexing tools can be used to scan journal content for possible inclusion in the database.

References

• Senator D’Amato (NY). “The Animal Welfare Act Amendment to Ensure the Proper Treatment of Laboratory Animals.” Congressional Record, July 29, 1985, p. 52096

These and other resources can be accessed at http://awic.nal.usda.gov