Imperial College London News Release

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Response to the report by the independent committee chaired by Professor Steve Brown

Imperial College London has announced the immediate actions it is taking following the publication of the report into the culture and approach to animal care and welfare at the College. The College asked Professor Steve Brown in April 2013 to convene an independent committee to investigate how Imperial can improve to meet the highest standards in animal research and care internationally. The report is published online today (10 December 2013).

The College has accepted all the recommendations of the committee and has thanked Professor Brown and his committee members for the time and energy they have given to the investigation. The College will now move quickly to implement the recommendations.

The committee commended the high standards of husbandry and animal care at Imperial. However, the College accepts that there is significant scope for improvement in aspects of the operation, management and oversight in order to become a world leader in animal research.

The College is strongly committed to reaching the very best level of international practice. Since the launch of the independent committee’s investigation, it has enhanced training and embedded a quality assurance programme in order to further improve the high standard of animal research at Imperial (see notes below). Building on these steps the College will:

- **Action a comprehensive plan by the end of January 2014 in response to the independent committee's report.** The College will engage external expertise to assist in the effective implementation of the Plan. The Plan will be developed by a group convened immediately which will be chaired by the Vice President (Health) and will be accountable to the President & Rector.
- **As a priority invest in staffing and leadership in order to:**
  - develop and drive a strategy for achieving the highest standards in animal research
  - strengthen the College’s emphasis on replacing, reducing or refining the use of animals in research in order to become a leader in this area
- **Provide regular updates of progress implementing the recommendations at [www.imperial.ac.uk/research/animal-research](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/research/animal-research)**
- **Publish an annual report on animal research at Imperial.**

The College reiterates its strong belief that the use of animals in research is essential to improve human and animal health and welfare. Its stated policy is that animals may only be used in research programmes where their use is shown to be essential for developing new treatments and making medical advances. Imperial is committed to ensuring that, in cases where this research is deemed essential, all animals in the College’s care are treated with full respect, and that all staff involved with this work show due consideration at every level.

**Further background to the review and to animal research at Imperial are provided as Notes below**

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BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

Professor Brown was asked by Imperial in April 2013 to lead the investigation after the College received allegations about animal research at Imperial via a newspaper. Professor Brown selected his own committee members and the committee agreed its own terms of reference. Its role was not to investigate the specific allegations, as that is a matter for the Home Office to undertake. The Home Office is expected to report on its own findings in early 2014.

Since April 2013, other steps taken by the College include:

- Establishing a programme of compulsory refresher lectures for all licence holders including sessions on individual and project Home Office licence conditions, and ethical and legal responsibilities for licence holders.

- Introducing additional on-site and online training resources for animal care and welfare staff.

- Introducing a quality assurance programme led by the users of the animal research facilities. The quality assurance programme will extend existing structures at Imperial to develop and promote best practice in animal research and the 3Rs.

- Establishing a quality assurance committee comprising senior researchers, veterinarians and animal technicians to implement best practice in animal research and the 3Rs, review training and development and extend internal and external evaluation processes to complement continuing work with external regulators. The quality assurance committee has set up forums for relevant staff who hold project licences across all of Imperial's campuses to provide an additional engagement mechanism.

- Initiating the implementation of a new record management system to enhance the way information about experiments undertaken and training is recorded by the scientists involved.

BACKGROUND TO ANIMAL RESEARCH AT IMPERIAL

Over 1,000 people at Imperial, across six departments and based on four separate sites, are currently involved in animal research. The College’s policy is that animals may only be used in research programmes where their use is shown to be essential.

Understanding the basic biology of infections, injuries and chronic diseases is an essential step in finding new treatments and cures. From cancer to malaria and war wounds to heart disease, research using animals forms an important element of this work, bringing benefits for human and animal health.
The College is committed to ensuring this work is carried out to the highest possible standards. As well as acting on the committee’s report recommendations Imperial continues to work closely with the Home Office, which is carrying out its own investigations as required under its statutory obligations.

Imperial recently signed up to NC3Rs’ ARRIVE guidelines, which the College was involved in developing, that aim to minimise unnecessary animal studies. They are a 20-point checklist for researchers reporting on animal experiments designed to ensure any data collected can be fully evaluated and utilised by other scientists.

For further information visit:

www.imperial.ac.uk/research/animal-research
http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/secretariat/collegegovernance/provisions/policies/animalresearch

EXAMPLES OF THE IMPACT OF ANIMAL RESEARCH AT IMPERIAL

SHINING A LIGHT ON BACTERIAL INFECTIONS

World’s first centre to focus on bacteria that cause diseases

The MRC Centre for Molecular Bacteriology and Infection specialises in training young academics and clinically qualified researchers in bacterial diseases in order to address the current lack of UK-trained expertise in the field.

Work includes the labelling of bacteria with visible-light markers to track the lifecycle of a bacterial (E. coli) gut infection in a mouse. The data collected is used to create a film of the infection. Filming a single live mouse in real time avoids the need for culling animals and examining them at different stages of infection, significantly reducing the number of animals used. The technique could help our understanding of bacteria that cause diseases such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and meningitis, as well as genito-urinary and blood infections. Researchers in the lab where this work was carried out won the inaugural NC3Rs Prize in 2006 (www.imperial.ac.uk/college.asp?P=7388).

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/newsandeventspggrp/imperialcollege/newssummary/news_2-7-2012-9-21-9

PREPARING FOR NEW STRAINS OF BIRD FLU

Scientists identify small genetic changes that enable the bird flu virus to replicate more easily in the noses of mammals

So far there have only been isolated cases of bird flu in humans, and no widespread transmission as the H5N1 virus can’t replicate efficiently in the nose. This study using weakened viruses in the lab supports the conclusions of controversial research published in 2012 which demonstrated that just a few genetic mutations could enable bird flu to spread between ferrets, which are used to model flu infection in humans. Researchers say the new findings could help to develop more effective vaccines against new strains of bird flu that can spread between humans.

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/newsandeventspggrp/imperialcollege/newssummary/news_8-4-2013-12-47-4
FINDING NEW TREATMENTS FOR TUBERCULOSIS

Old antibiotic could be a new weapon to fight TB

A cheap and safe antibiotic that is widely available in the developing world might have a new use as a tuberculosis (TB) treatment. Doxycycline was introduced in 1967 and is used to treat a wide range of bacterial infections, but until now has not been recognised as effective against TB.

Researchers at Imperial College London discovered that doxycycline suppresses the production of an enzyme called MMP-1 that destroys lung tissue infected with TB. They also found that doxycycline directly inhibits the growth of the bacteria in guinea pigs – a surprising result since the drug has been widely used as an antibiotic for over 40 years but has not been considered effective against TB.

http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/newsandevents/3pggrp/imperialcollege/newssummary/news_17-2-2012-11-10-13