

# The Massachusetts Society for Medical Research, Inc.

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The Editor  
*The Boston Globe Magazine*  
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Boston, MA 02205-5819

Dear Editor:

Ethical researchers take their responsibilities for animal use very seriously. *A Dog's Life* (04.18.04) should have explained more clearly the obligations scientists feel and the stringent laws and regulations they must follow regarding humane and ethical animal research.

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), required by federal law, is an essential feature of research institutions that use animals. IACUCs review every procedure involving animals; they question and challenge the purpose and importance of animal use and all aspects of animal care. A thorough search for valid alternatives to animals is mandated in every proposal the committee reviews. And all proposed animal studies require IACUC approval before they can start.

An IACUC must include a veterinarian with relevant training, a scientist experienced in lab animal studies, and an independent community member who speaks for the public's interest in animal well-being. These folks are neither patsies nor pushovers. To convince them requires clear, hard thinking by the scientist. The researcher must prove that the right animal model is used and that the research strictly adheres to the three Rs – reduce the number of animals to the lowest possible number, refine the research in ways that absolutely minimize pain and distress, replace animals with alternative research techniques that have been proven acceptable.

Biomedical science is about life-saving discoveries for both humans and animals. Medical and veterinary researchers, IACUC members, and animal caretakers have a profound respect for research animals and a passion for humane and ethical care.

Sincerely,

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