

PP 22 - Establishing a culture of care for animal research through ethics review training

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Introduction: High quality science and humane animal care are fundamentally inseparable. Knowledge and attitudes regarding the ethical treatment of animals in research is a growing concern among present day researchers. The present study is based on an interactive one-day workshop, held for members of the Ethical Review Committees (ERC) and researchers (n=56) of state universities and research institutions (n=9) across Sri Lanka. This study aimed to analyse the impact of the training on pre-existing concepts and attitudes on welfare and ethics of animals in research.

Methods: This was an observational, questionnaire-based study. A pre-and post-workshop questionnaire with 35 questions was designed to reflect (a) knowledge, (b) attitudes and (c) practice involving animal subjects. A score was assigned to each question 1 for true and 0 for false/don't know answers. The percentage variation of each question category along with individual participants overall score before and after the workshop was analysed in 29 participants. As part of the training 7 animal use and care statements were also given to evaluate participants perceptions.

Results: The most significant difference was found in knowledge (20%) followed by attitude (10%). It was also observed that the majority (93%) of participants achieved an improvement in their overall score in the post-workshop assessment. The participants perception on animal use and care statements revealed that the majority felt that the use of animals for personal pleasure was never justified, while use in utilitarian purposes such as food, research and protection was sometimes justifiable.

Conclusion: This study reflects on the necessity of such training and other educational events on a broader scale, which will in turn contribute to positive changes in the existing animal welfare regulations as well as raise the bar for future ethical guidelines on animal research in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: animal ethics, animal welfare, animal experiments, Sri Lanka

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