

# WMA STATEMENT ON ANIMAL USE IN BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH

*Adopted by the 41<sup>st</sup> World Medical Assembly, Hong Kong, September 1989*

*revised by the 57<sup>th</sup> WMA General Assembly, Pilanesberg, South Africa, October 2006*

*and reaffirmed by the 203<sup>rd</sup> WMA Council Session, Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 2016*

## PREAMBLE

1. Biomedical research is essential to the health and well-being of our society. Advances in biomedical research have dramatically improved the quality and prolonged the duration of life throughout the world. However, the ability of the scientific community to continue its efforts to improve personal and public health is being threatened by a movement to eliminate the use of animals in biomedical research. This movement is spearheaded by groups of radical animal rights activists whose views are considered to be far outside mainstream public attitudes and whose tactics range from sophisticated lobbying, fund-raising, propaganda and misinformation campaigns to violent attacks on biomedical research facilities and individual scientists. These violent attacks are carried out by a relatively small number of activists compared with those who use peaceful means of protest, but they have profound and wide-ranging effects.
2. The magnitude of violent animal rights activities is staggering, and these activities take place in many different parts of the world. Various animal rights groups have claimed responsibility for the bombing of cars, institutions, stores, and the private homes of researchers.
3. Animal rights violence has had a chilling effect on the scientific community internationally. Scientists, research organizations, and universities have been intimidated into altering or even terminating important research efforts that depend on the use of animals. Laboratories have been forced to divert thousands of research dollars for the purchase of sophisticated security equipment. Young people who might otherwise pursue a career in biomedical research are turning their sights to alternative professions.
4. Despite the efforts of many groups striving to protect biomedical research from radical animal activism, the response to the animal rights movement has been fragmented, under-funded, and primarily defensive. Many groups within the biomedical community are hesitant to take a public stand about animal activism because of fear of reprisal. As a result, the research establishment has been backed into a defensive posture. Its motivations are questioned, and the need for using animals in research is repeatedly challenged.
5. While properly designed and executed research involving animals is necessary to enhance the medical care of all persons, we recognize also that humane treatment of research animals must be ensured. Appropriate training for all research personnel should be prescribed and adequate veterinary care should be available. Experiments must comply with any rules or regulations promulgated to govern humane handling, housing, care, treatment and transportation of animals.
6. International medical and scientific organizations must develop a stronger and more cohesive campaign to counter the growing threat to public health posed by animal activists. Leadership and coordination must be provided. In addition, there must be a clear understanding of the rights of animals who are part of medical research, and the obligations of those who undertake it.

The World Medical Association therefore affirms the following principles:

1. Animal use in biomedical research is essential for continued medical progress.
2. The WMA Declaration of Helsinki requires that biomedical research involving human subjects should be based, where appropriate, on animal experimentation, but also requires that the welfare of animals used for research be respected.
3. Humane treatment of animals used in biomedical research is essential and research facilities should be required to comply with all guiding principles for humane treatment. Education about these principles should be provided to all researchers in training.

4. Animals should only be used in biomedical research when it is clear that their use is required to achieve an important outcome, and where no other feasible method is available.
5. Duplication of animal experiments should not occur unless scientifically justified.
6. The use of animals for the futile testing of cosmetic products and their ingredients, alcohol and tobacco should not be supported.
7. Although rights to free speech should not be compromised, the anarchistic element among animal right activists should be condemned.
8. The use of threats, intimidation, violence, and personal harassment of scientists and their families should be condemned internationally.
9. A maximum coordinated effort from international law enforcement agencies should be sought to protect researchers and research facilities from activities of a terrorist nature.