The Research Animal Coordinator:
A Tool to Foster a Culture of Compliance

OLAW Online Webinar
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UNC-CH Statistics in 2002

- 350 Principal Investigators
- 1200 approved applications
- 100 labs requiring inspections
- 1400 animal handlers
- 11 university-managed animal housing facilities
- 20 investigator-managed animal facilities

IACUC FTE Personnel Support Statistics in 2002

- 1 IACUC Director
- 2 Training and Compliance Coordinators
- 1 IACUC Administrative Manager
- 4 Administrative Assistants
- 1/3 IACUC Chair (Faculty)

Desirable Qualities in an Animal Handler Training Program

- Manageable
- Consistent
- Reliable
- Rodent-based

UNC Laboratory Animal Coordinator Certification Program

Uniform and consistent training for researchers working with rodents.

What is a Laboratory Animal Coordinator?

A trained and certified member of the research team responsible for:

- coordinating animal activities in the laboratory,

- training lab members in proper animal handling, and

- serving as a liaison with the IACUC and animal support services.

Initial Steps

- Principal Investigators (PI) with active IACUC application must appoint a Laboratory Animal Coordinator (LAC)

- PI can serve as LAC

- LAC should be a permanent employee rather than a student

IACUC Ambassador

- Serves as lab contact for the IACUC
- Receives new IACUC policies and guidelines
- Communicates information to PIs, lab members, administrators
- Attends semi-annual meetings with IACUC representatives
- Network of Lab Animal Coordinators (NLAC)
- Liaison between the lab and IACUC

Numbers

- 2002 – 2014:
  - 1262 LACs trained and certified
  - 13,171 total researchers trained and certified
    - 40% trained by LACs
- LACs trained annually
  - Initially: between 250 and 330
  - Currently: an average of 86
- 2012: LACs trained 474 students and OACU trained 624

Duke University and
Duke University Medical Center

- 24 + permanent care and use facilities
- ~ 3000 program participants, including PIs, techs, vets, care staff
- In the top tier of funded research universities
- PHS Assured
- USDA registered
- AAALAC accredited

Who Are We?

- We are us
- We are larger than some but smaller than others
- We have similar communities
- We have the same rules
- We have the same challenges
- We have the same needs:
    - Educate
    - Communicate

Progress?

2004:

- PIs frustrated
- IACUC over-burdened
- Administration open to change

We needed a plan!
We needed a direction!
We needed a beacon!

Culture of Compliance or New Strategy?

Culture

- Who you are

- Lifestyle

- Basis for consistently making the right decision

Strategy

- Drives to a goal

- Invites to join toward a goal

- Actions guided by a set of rules

Duke's Culture of Compliance

- Running monthly average of > 90% compliant
  - 6 month index, each month adding the next month while dropping the oldest month
- Self-identification, self-correction, self-reporting
- No significant animal welfare NCIs

Changing a Program

Programs are like ships!

- They don't move fast
- They don't change course fast
- They require a firm, patient hand on the rudder

Changing Duke's
Animal Care and Use Program

- Late 2004: Minimal improvement

- 2005: Significant improvement

- 2006: Uh-oh … hit a sandbar!

What Drove Us onto a Sandbar?

- Late 2004: Minimal improvement
- 2005: Significant improvement
- 2006: Uh-oh … hit a sandbar!
  - PIs were pleased, but becoming frustrated
  - IACUC was happy, but becoming impatient
  - OAWA staff and Director --- EXHAUSTED!

Options?

- No new resources or personnel
- Maybe we had done all we could – let's quit
- Find a way to re-establish momentum
- Find a way to continue on course

The Key

Work Smarter, Not Harder!

5 Pillars of RAC-dom

- Not a required activity

- Serve as an extension of the animal program

- Serve as eyes, ears, and voice of the IACUC

- Identify what is not working and
  bring new ideas to the IACUC

- Be a programmatic first responder
  when bad things happen to
  good researchers and great animals

Dynamic

"We have never done it that way before!"

(the 7 last words of a dying institution)

Moving Forward

- Ducks either paddle forward or float backward
- As do animal care and use programs

Judging Program Effectiveness

- Do NOT ask, "Do we have a plan or process?"
- Ask, "How do our plans or process achieve our goals and expectation?"

Laboratory Animal Coordinator

- Liaison
- Continuity of training
- Distribution of work load
- Education
- Dissemination of information
- Collaboration
- Networking
- Mandatory

Building Consistency

- Permanent lab members

- Reviewing the protocol

- Going over IACUC policies

- Establishing a working relationship

- Building a culture of compliance

The Training of a LAC

Hands-on didactic training class with certification by an OACU Training and Compliance Coordinator

- Participants register online for one of three classes

- Classes held in lab training space provided by School of Medicine

- Proficiency Rating System (I, II, III)
  - Rating of I indicates person is able to train others

Proficiency Rating System

I. Highest: after completion of LAC lecture series, is allowed to train and certify laboratory personnel

II. Average: is able to perform certified techniques, but not allowed to train others

III. Person is able to perform techniques, assistance by other laboratory personnel is recommended

Required LAC Lecture

Presented once per month. Also available by appointment with Training and Compliance Coordinator (IACUC staff) to facilitate timely approval. Topics include:

- Training and duties of the LAC
- Online certification system for LACs who certify lab personnel
- Introduction to online protocol application system (ACAP)
- Grant congruency, lab and facility inspections, post approval monitoring practices
- IACUC and Department of Laboratory Animal Medicine policies
- Required monitoring and documentation in the laboratory
- Resources available at UNC-CH
- Important compliance issues, policy updates, etc.

Other Training at UNC-CH

- Lectures:
  - Mouse Breeding Policy: Required for at least 1 person per lab approved for mouse breeding
  - Colony Management: Optional, good resource for LACs and others
- One-on-one sessions:
  - Offered 1x / week by TCCs (3 hours per week)
  - Scheduled to accommodate researchers, facilitate quicker approvals, specialize training to needs

Duke RACs

- 85 active RACs
- 25 to 30 graduate every 10 months
- Why not more?
  - Our philosophy: build relationships
  - Our goal: culture of compliance

Investment and ROI

- PI recommends individual
- PI invests lab time and personnel
- PI expects return on investment (ROI)
  - Lab mentor for junior staff
  - Protocol prep
  - Trainer for handling and procedures
  - Compliance monitor
  - Assistance with corrective measures

RAC Training Program

- PI recommendation
- Phase I training (core competencies)
  - AALAS Learning Library
  - Monthly Table Talks lab mentor for junior staff
- Phase II training (species-specific skills)
  - LAR trainers
- Graduation ceremony and reception
  - IO and IACUC Chair
  - Lapel pin and certificate
  - Reception with PI, lab members, and IACUC

Training Structure at UNC-CH

- Hands-on classes (per month, 2.5 hours per class)
  - 2 mouse handling and techniques classes
  - 1 rat handling and techniques class
  - 1 aseptic technique class
  - Each class accommodates up to 12 students
  - Each taught by all 3 TCCs
- Lectures:
  - Offered once per month by 1 TCC
  - By appointment
  - One hour per lecture

Who's your LAC?

- Each laboratory/protocol **MUST** have one person designated as the LAC.
- The PI indicates which lab member(s) will serve as LAC(s) by indicating the role in the personnel section of our online protocol system.
- This person must attend the LAC lecture before the protocol is approved.
- Proficiency of I (ability to train others) is not a requirement.

RAC Community

- PI recommends, does not appoint

- IACUC may "encourage" PI to recommend

- Preferred community is mid-level to senior lab members

  - Sufficient experience to understand issues

  - Are fairly permanent

RAC Benefits

- PIs: skilled resource to navigate animal care and use
- RAC: institutional recognition, responsibility, authority
- Lab members: trusted knowledgeable partner
- IACUC: better applications, fewer significant NCIs, less significant NCIs
- Office of Animal Welfare Assurance: laboratory resource
- IO and Program: RAC Advisory Committee
- Animals: more well trained eyes, quicker response

Good Animal Care & Good Science Go Hand In Hand

Post Approval Monitoring and the LAC: The Procedural Process

- Federal regulations, guidelines and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* require institutions to ensure compliance through continuing monitoring. Some institutions choose to conduct continuing monitoring through post approval monitoring (PAM) programs.

- At UNC this federal mandate is typically conducted during semiannual inspections, with the LAC through a procedural observation which is conducted by TCCs.

- The LAC is usually the person responsible for onboarding and training new laboratory members so their proficiency in approved procedures is paramount.

Animal Welfare Concern Communication and the LAC

When the OACU Training and Compliance Team receives information regarding animal welfare concern, protocol non-compliance, or adverse event:

- Immediate communication regarding the incident usually occurs with the PI and LAC

- The LAC acts as a liaison between the OACU/IACUC staff and the PI

NLAC

- Network of Laboratory Animal Coordinators
- Steering committee consisting of LACs and IACUC Director.
- Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine veterinarian sets agenda
  for quarterly seminars
- NLAC listserve

Resources

- http://grants.nih.gov/grants/OLAW/educational_resources.htm

- UNC-Chapel Hill
  - All class handouts, certification sheets, lectures, Lab Animal vol. 39, No. 4 | APRIL 2010 LAC article
  - http://research.unc.edu/offices/iacuc/training/

Question 1

What percentage of laboratories at Duke have RACs?

Question 2

To whom do RACs and LACs report?

Question 3

Do RACs or LACs ever serve on the institution's IACUC?

Question 4

Do LACs or RACs participate in IACUC investigations and formulating corrective actions to non-compliant animal activities?

Question 5

When in labs or procedure rooms and interacting with PIs and animal users, do coordinators point out and suggest correction of observed activities that are contrary to protocol descriptions?

Or, do they 'report' those noncompliances to someone else who then advises PIs and animal users that changes need to be made?

If they report to someone else, is that someone else the IACUC? The compliance component? Other?

Question 6

How did your researchers buy-in?

Was it willingly?

Question 7

Did the senior administration embrace these plans?

If so, what was responsible for administration buy-in?

Question 8

UNC and Duke are both have large animal care and use programs.

Do you think this sort of PAM program is best for a large campus?

Question 9

Do you have people who drop out of the process?

Or maybe get encouraged to stop?

Question 10

How many campuses do you know are looking toward something like this?

Upcoming OLAW Webinar

December 4 – IACUC Review of Aquatics

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/educational_resources.htm

- Recording of this webinar, transcript, and slides will be posted on the OLAW website.

- Previous webinars can be reviewed on the OLAW website