



Position Statement on the Use of Animals in Research

Introduction

Prostate Cancer UK is dedicated to funding a programme of research to discover and develop better tests and treatments to stop prostate cancer from being a killer and from damaging bodies and lives. In common with most medical research charities, we acknowledge that despite developments in areas such as cell culture and computer modelling there will be times when research still depends on the use of animals. We also recognise that there is some public concern surrounding the use of animals in medical research and we are committed to being open and transparent about the research that we fund and which involves animals. This document therefore outlines:

- i. Our position on the use of animals in medical research
- ii. The conditions within which we base decisions to support research involving animals

Position Statement

Prostate Cancer UK is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), which represents the leading medical and health research charities in the UK. As a member, we support the [AMRC Statement on the Use of Animals in Medical Research](#)¹. This document should therefore be read in conjunction with the AMRC Statement¹.

Medical research is carried out to help promote and improve health and to prevent and treat disease. Research involving animals has been fundamental to understanding how the body functions in health and disease and to the development of modern medicines and surgical procedures.

Most medical research involves techniques such as test-tube and cell culture work, computer simulations, clinical trials, human tissue analyses and epidemiological surveys, but some major advances rely on animal-based studies. In parallel, new medicines are required by law to use animals during development and safety-testing.

Prostate Cancer UK would like to see future advances made without research involving animals; however, despite developments in areas such as cell culture and computer modelling, work with animals continues to be essential in some aspects of medical research. We therefore support such work where no alternative exists and where it is carried out according to best practice as laid down in legislation.

Well-designed research yields clear data using the minimum number of animals and with the least possible suffering. The [Animals \(Scientific Procedures\) Act 1986](#)² and guidance from the Home Office safeguard the welfare of animals used in research while allowing important work to continue. These are widely considered to be the best regulations for such work anywhere in the world.

Guiding principle – the Three R's

Following AMRC and Home Office guidance, Prostate Cancer UK will not fund animal research unless it is essential and there is no alternative. Our conditions of grant awards require grant-holders to apply the principle of the Three R's in all animal experiments³:

- **Reducing** the number of animals used in an experiment to the minimum necessary for reliable results
- **Refining** the experimental procedures to minimise the pain, suffering or distress caused to animals
- **Replacing** animal experiments wherever possible by non-animal methods

Wherever possible our scientists aim to carry out their research on men, on computers or on cells in a laboratory and many of the projects we fund are like this. But scientists do need to explore every available avenue and this will sometimes involve animals. Where animals are used in research, the Three R's are central to carrying out this research as ethically and humanely as possible. Our application forms specifically ask for details regarding these Three R's and this is rigorously assessed by independent peer reviewers and by our scientific committee.

The Use of Animals in our Research

Using animals in research is not an issue that we or any of our scientists take lightly. We encourage scientists to develop techniques that mean the use of fewer animals in research.

We will support research involving the use of animals providing that:

- It is fully compliant with current Home Office legislation⁴
- It has been independently peer-reviewed
- Due consideration has been given to the refinement, reduction or replacement of the animals in the research and no viable non-animals alternatives exist

We are also committed to supporting the best possible research for people affected by prostate cancer. We will be open, transparent and honest in response to any public or media enquiry concerning our support of projects involving the use of animals. It is not, however, our policy to identify the individual projects which we fund, that involve animals.

Position Statement on the Use of Stem Cells in Research

Stem cells are cells that can keep dividing and can grow into a number of different cell types. They can be derived from a number of tissues in both humans and animals, including embryos.

Stem cells are useful in medical research, as they can help us to understand the development and repair of different types of tissue. For example, stem cell research may provide us with clues about what causes normal cells to become cancerous. Often, the stem cells that scientists refer to in prostate cancer research are cancer cells in the prostate which give rise to the growth of further cells, and from which a tumour originates. This type of cancer stem cell is thought to be critical in the development and spread of tumours.

Prostate Cancer UK will fund research using stem cells where this is necessary to understand tumour development and to improve the outcomes for men with prostate cancer. To realise the full potential of stem cells for improving health, Prostate Cancer UK believes that scientists must be able to continue research in all avenues of stem cell research, including adult, human embryonic and induced pluripotent stem cells in basic and clinical science.

Prostate Cancer UK is committed to supporting the development and subsequent translation of stem cell research into healthcare benefits for men with prostate cancer. The mechanism by which this is achieved should be whichever is most likely to produce a successful healthcare impact that benefits men. We do not stipulate how this should be achieved and the appropriate route for researchers to best accomplish this impact will vary according to individual circumstances and may require a combination of approaches.

Ethical and regulatory requirements

As with all scientific research funded by Prostate Cancer UK, stem cell research will be funded on merit and scientific excellence after rigorous peer review and in line with the current legal and regulatory framework. We expect all Prostate Cancer UK-funded researchers to conduct stem cell research according to high ethical standards. Specific guidance related to research using stem cells can be found in the UK Stem Cell Bank's '[Code of Practice for the use of Human Stem Cell Lines](#)'. Prostate Cancer UK will only fund research outside of the UK that would be considered to be in line with current good practice and the principles of UK legislation.

Depositing high quality cell lines in stem cell banks, maximises resources, reduces duplication and encourages consistency in the field. Prostate Cancer UK requires that researchers deposit a viable sample of every human embryonic stem cell line derived in the course of Prostate Cancer UK-funded research with an internationally recognised stem cell bank, such as the National Stem Cell Bank in the UK. We recommend that stem cell lines of other types (e.g. somatic, induced pluripotent) are likewise deposited in an appropriate bank.

We recognise the complexity of ongoing legal, ethical, social and scientific developments in relation to human embryonic stem cells and we will continue to monitor and develop our policies in this area. We will seek to influence legal and policy developments in relation to stem cells where Prostate Cancer UK is of the view that this is necessary in furthering our vision.

Further information about specific projects that we fund can be found on our [website](#).

References

For further information about the Use of Animals in Research, please see:

1. The Association of Medical Research Charities
<https://www.amrc.org.uk/position-statement-on-the-use-of-animals-in-research>
2. The Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, which governs any experimental or other scientific procedure applied to a protected animal.
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/14/contents>
3. The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in research, was set up by the government in 2004 in response to a House of Lords select committee report on the use of animals in scientific procedures, which encourages more work to find ways of reducing animal use in experiments.
<http://www.nc3rs.org.uk/>
4. The Home Office, which regulates the use of animals in medical research in the UK, by issuing licenses and inspecting animal testing facilities.
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/research-and-testing-using-animals>