Drug Discovery and Evaluation: Pharmacological Assays
DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-27728-3_131-1

Regulations for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals in Various Countries

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In nearly all countries in the world, the use of laboratory animals for biomedical research in academia as well as in industry is regulated by national legislations. Regulations for the care and use of laboratory animals in various countries are subject of permanent legislative changes, adaptations, improvements, etc. Therefore, any information on the legislation in various countries can be only a snapshot for the time being.

In many countries, legislation of research is regulated in a specific animal experimentation act, while in other countries, this is included in the animal welfare/protection act. In nearly all countries, animal experimentation needs an approval by the local authorities before the start of the experimentation, as well as regular inspections by the local veterinary authorities (bureau) with respect to animal housing, handling, and experimentation.

In the European Union (EU) in November 2008, it was decided that the European directive concerning the use of animals in biomedical research should be revised, with the aim of more standardization of the legislation in the European Member States. The final text of the directive was finalized and signed on 22 September 2010 and named 2010/63/EU. When the directive was in force, the deadline for the Member States to transpose it into their own words into national laws until end of 2012 was also put. The directive is formally applied across Europe as of 1 January 2013. There are 28 Member States of the EU as of the end of 2014: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUC) are of central importance to the application of laws to animal research in many counties, e.g., the United States, in all European countries according to the EU directive 210/63/EU, etc. In some countries, IACUC are mandatory for all biomedical research using laboratory animals (e.g., EU countries, China), while in other countries, this committee is only necessary for every institution that uses animals for federally funded laboratory research (e.g., the Unites States). Each local IACUC reviews research protocols and conducts evaluations of the institution's animal care and use, which includes the results of inspections of facilities that are required by law. The IACUC must consist of several members appointed by the institution. The appointed members must be qualified to regulate animal care at that institution. The IACUC must include a veterinarian with expertise in the species used at the institution, practicing scientist(s) experienced in animal research, as well as a lay member with the knowledge of critical concerns that are in nonscientific areas.

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