

Dr. Lyric Jorgensen
Office of Science Policy
Office of the Director
National Institutes of Health
6705 Rockledge Drive, Suite 750
Bethesda, MD 20892

December 1, 2010

Dear Dr. Jorgensen,

Statement by Comparative Medicine Institutional Training Grant Directors to the National Institutes of Health Scientific Management Review Board

The directors of the 45 veterinary institutional training grants supported by the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) submit the following comments to the Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (TMAT) working group and the NIH Scientific Management Review Board (SMRB).

We would like to emphasize the value of the NCRR, and in particular the institutional training grants currently administered by the Division of Comparative Medicine (DCM), to the success of biomedical research and translational medicine. These grants address an important infrastructure need for biomedical research by providing high-quality, mentored training in comparative medical research for veterinarians. Regardless of the organizational fate of the NCRR, the "training pipeline" it provides is a critical element of our national research infrastructure and should not be lost or diverted.

Comparative medical veterinary scientists are uniquely positioned to understand and explore the interspecies comparisons that are an essential element of translational research. They are an indispensable component of the scientific workforce as both independent and collaborative investigators, with the knowledge and training required to avoid misinterpretation of experimental findings in animal model systems. The need for such qualified individuals is outlined in the National Research Council's publication *National Need and Priorities for Veterinarians in Biomedical Research* (National Academy Press, 2004).

The vital contribution of comparative medical veterinary researchers to the development of therapeutic agents is most evident in those studies requiring use of the Food and Drug Administration's Animal Rule, which governs the development of new drug and biological drug products when human efficacy studies are not ethical or feasible. The rule requires (1) "a well-understood pathophysiological mechanism", (2) "a sufficiently well-characterized animal model", (3) a study endpoint "clearly related to the desired benefit in humans", (4) "[understanding of] pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics [sufficient to expect] effectiveness in humans" (FDA, Federal Register 2002, 67:37988-98). Any meaningful degree of validity in the assessment of these criteria requires the expertise of veterinarians trained in research.

We believe that the training provided for comparative medical veterinary scientists should be supported by a non-categorical mechanism, because the nature of the skills provided by our training programs exceeds the purview of any specific categorical NIH institute. While some graduates of our programs have gone on to specialize in a field supported by a specific institute, most work collaboratively across multiple organ systems or disease entities.

The Division of Comparative Medicine has served translational medicine well to date, and is poised to flourish in the context of the new Center for Translational Science proposed by the TMAT working group. The program directors and administrators have the extensive experience and insight necessary to bring the capabilities of veterinary and comparative scientists to bear in the service of human health needs.

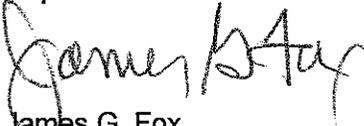
We therefore recommend:

1. That individuals with appropriate comparative medical expertise be involved in the development of the reorganization plan for the future of NCRR programs

and

2. That the Division of Comparative Medicine and the programs it oversees be maintained as is or become fully incorporated as an entire unit in future configurations of the NIH.

Representative for the Training Directors:



James G. Fox
Professor and Director
Division of Comparative Medicine
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
77 Massachusetts Avenue, 16-825
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-1735
FAX: 617-258-5708
jgfox@mit.edu

The following Directors of DCM T32 and T35 Institutional Training Grants have reviewed and approved this statement:

Dr. Leslie Garry Adams
Texas A&M University
gadams@cvm.tamu.edu

Dr. S. Ansar Ahmed
Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary
Medicine
ansrahmd@vt.edu

Dr. Mohammed Sawkat Anwer
Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine
sawkat.anwer@tufts.edu

Dr. Michael L. Atchison
atchison@vet.upenn.edu

Dr. Stephen W. Barthold
University of California, Davis
swbarthold@ucdavis.edu

Dr. Dale Edmond Bjorling
University of Wisconsin
bjorlind@svm.vetmed.wisc.edu

Dr. Robert S. Bridges
Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine
robert.bridges@tufts.edu

Dr. Paul S. Buckmaster
Stanford University School of Medicine
psb@stanford.edu

Dr. Cathy S. Carlson
University of Minnesota
Carls099@umn.edu

Dr. J. Mark Cline
Wake Forest University School of Medicine
jmcline@wfubmc.edu

Dr. Charles J. Czuprynski
University of Wisconsin-Madison
czuprync@svm.vetmed.wisc.edu

Dr. Gregg A. Dean
North Carolina State University College of
Veterinary Medicine
gregg_dean@ncsu.edu

Dr. James G. Fox
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
jgfox@mit.edu

Dr. Craig L. Franklin
University of Missouri
franlinc@missouri.edu

Dr. Robert F. Gilmour, Jr.
Cornell University
rfg2@cornell.edu

Dr. Harm HogenEsch
Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine
hogenesch@purdue.edu

Dr. Edward A. Hoover
Colorado State University
edward.hoover@colostate.edu

Dr. Lois L. Hoyer
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
College of Veterinary Medicine
lhoyer@illinois.edu

Dr. Samuel L. Jones
North Carolina State University College of
Veterinary Medicine
sljones@gw.ncsu.edu

Dr. Michael J. Kenney
Kansas State University College of Veterinary
Medicine
kenney@vet.k-state.edu

Dr. Ann B. Kier
Texas A&M University
akier@cvm.tamu.edu

Dr. Thomas R. Klei
Louisiana State University
School of Veterinary Medicine
klei@vetmed.lsu.edu

Dr. Andrew Alan Lackner
Tulane National Primate Research Center
alackner@tulane.edu

Dr. Michael D. Lairmore
The Ohio State University
Lairmore.1@osu.edu

Dr. Mark L. Lawrence
Mississippi State University
College of Veterinary Medicine
lawrence@cvm.msstate.edu

Dr. Kent Lloyd
University of California-Davis
kclloyd@ucdavis.edu

Dr. Keith G. Mansfield
Harvard Medical School
keith_mansfield@hms.harvard.edu

Dr. Douglas D. McGregor
Cornell University School of Veterinary Medicine
ddm7@cornell.edu

Dr. Xiang-Jin Meng
Virginia Tech College of Veterinary Medicine
xjmeng@vt.edu

Dr. Michael J. Oglesbee
The Ohio State University
oglesbee.1@osu.edu

Dr. Gregory J. Phillips
Iowa State University
College of Veterinary medicine
gregory@iastate.edu

Dr. David J. Prieur
Washington State University
College of Veterinary Medicine
dprieur@vetmed.wsu.edu

Dr. Susan Sanchez
University of Georgia
College of Veterinary Medicine
ssanchez@uga.edu

Dr. Robert L. Tanguay
Oregon State University
robert.tanguay@oregonstate.edu

Dr. John H. Wolfe
University of Pennsylvania
jhwolfe@vet.upenn.edu

Dr. Vilma Yuzbasiyan-Gurkan
Michigan State University
yuzbasiyan@cvm.msu.edu

Dr. M. Christine Zink
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
mczink@jhmi.edu