

EARA News Digest, Week 29 - Battling media criticism; US wake-up call; EARA in Berlin; T-Cell Leukemia



EARA News Digest – Week 29

Welcome to your Monday morning update, [from EARA](#), on the latest developments in science, policy and openness in animal research in Europe and around the world.

Media

DeMorgen.

Prompt response by Belgian and Dutch scientists to media criticism

The biomedical sector responded quickly to a number of articles in the Belgian and [Dutch](#) press which [incorrectly](#) reported on the [poor translatability](#) of preclinical animal studies.

[Press headlines](#) stated that 'four out of five of all animal experiments were wasted'. In reaction, Belgian scientists and researchers signed an [opinion piece](#) in De Morgen reinforcing the importance of animal research. [A statement](#) also appeared on the website of the Dutch animal research association (SID).

EARA Executive Director, Kirk Leech, said: "This is an excellent example of how good co-ordination within the biomedical community led a rapid response to negative publicity at very short notice."

Media

US predictions of research cataclysm without openness

A [major overview](#) of the key communication problems facing animal research in the biomedical sector was published in [Science](#) magazine recently.



Starting at the highly open [Oregon National Primate Research Center](#), whose transparency work includes lab visits and [virtual tours](#), reporter [David Grimm](#) found that in the USA the institutional openness of the ONPRC is unfortunately the exception not the rule.

“We’ve failed abysmally in communicating scientific progress to the general public,” according to [Cindy A. Buckmaster of Americans for Medical Progress](#), promoting the need for animals in labs. A string of legal and legislative defeats, she says, “should be a cataclysmic wake-up call.”

Policy



German scientists urged to take responsibility and speak up on animal research

The German biomedical community has been urged [at an EARA event in Berlin](#), to communicate more to the public, talk about values and explain why animal research is important, not just use ‘facts and figures’.

A panel of experts from research, animal welfare and the science media came together to discuss the topic Improving Openness in Animal Research in Germany at the Max Delbrück Center, Berlin, (MDC) in an event supported by the Federation of European Neuroscience.

Setting the scene, EARA Executive Director, Kirk Leech, said that while progress had been made in Germany on communication there is still a significant reluctance within many academic institutions, and amongst scientists, towards conducting a more open and consistent dialogue with the public.

Volker Stollorz, of the German Science Media Centre, then illustrated how damaging a reluctance to talk could be and encouraged the audience to, "talk about your values not just facts and figures and spell out what animals you use."

A further two events to discuss this topic will be held in Germany this year; in Tübingen on 22 October and in Frankfurt am Main on 17 December 2018. More details will follow.

Research

KU LEUVEN

Leukemia: Cancer cells take advantage of 'survival protein'

Cancer researchers at KU Leuven, Belgium, an EARA member, have demonstrated that some patients with T-cell leukemia are producing too much of the 'survival protein' BCL-2.

And since cancer cells use BCL-2 to escape the effects of chemotherapy, scientists using mice have now [developed a drug to suppress it](#).

According to lead researcher [Professor Kim De Keersmaecker](#), "Cancer cells take advantage of the BCL-2 protein: it helps them to survive under difficult circumstances, including chemotherapy."

"Clinicians use this drug to treat chronic lymphocytic leukemia. But our research shows that it also suppresses T-cell leukemia with a specific ribosome defect," she added.
