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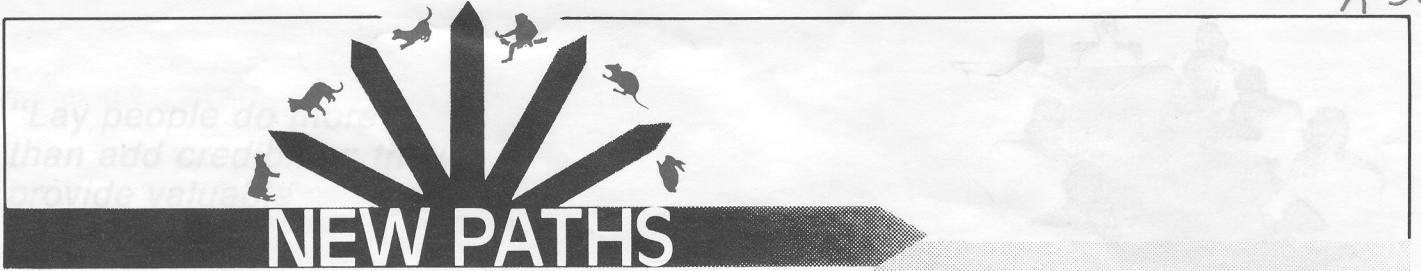
Buyukmihci, Nedim

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Minority Reports from Animal Activists on Institutional Animal Care Committees

Nedim C. Buyukmihci, V.M.D.
University of California,
Davis

In writing this piece, I have made the assumption, with good reason I believe, that animal activists on institutional animal care committees (IACC) are going to be in the minority with respect to their philosophy and positions on many or most of the protocols reviewed. Therefore, I feel it is imperative that these people submit minority reports to become part of the permanent records of the IACC. Because the minutes of IACCs are generally public record, the minority reports then serve to inform the public about animal use activity at that institution.

My own experience on the University of California, Davis, IACC (formally called the Animal Use and Care Administrative Advisory Committee) for three years suggested the value of submitting minority reports. During the discussion of a particular protocol, for example, many points would be brought out concerning the scientific quality of the project, the ethical considerations and the like. None of this, however, would end up in the min-

utes. Instead, a vote would be taken and only the results of the vote would be recorded. Not even the title of the project was recorded. This seemed inappropriate since someone reading the minutes would never know why there were votes against a particular project or that any moral or ethical objections were raised.

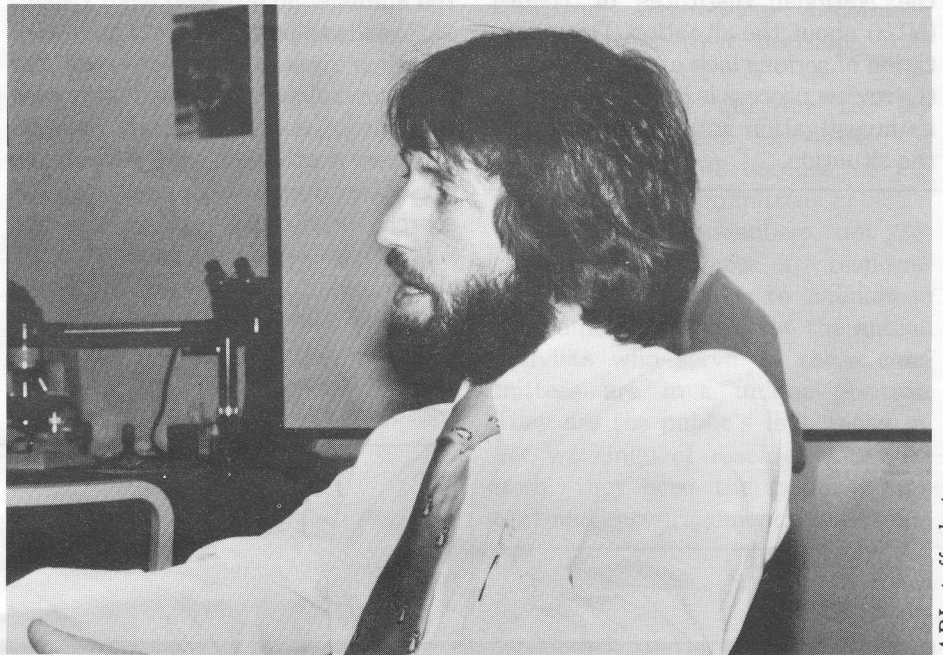
The minimum information included in a minority report should be:

- Institution's name
- Title of the project
- Investigator(s)
- Protocol number
- Species of animal used (number optional)
- Brief summary of the work (this can be worked in with your reasons for voting against the project).

I do not believe in routinely abstaining instead of voting no since this in effect is a vote against the project but without the same implications.

You also could include the proposed or current funding source. In providing your reasons for voting against a protocol, be sure to include objec-

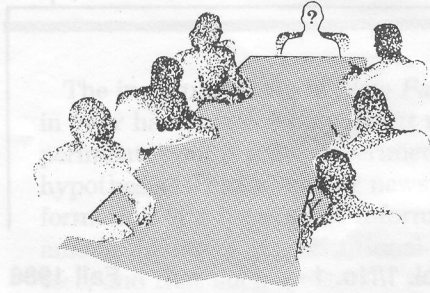
"My own experiences on [a] committee ... suggested the value of submitting minority reports."



Dr. Nedim Buyukmihci

API staff photo

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tions made on ethical grounds as well as for scientific reasons. It would be helpful if you also commented on particularly egregious statements that may be made by other committee members supporting the project or by the investigator if he/she was present at the meeting. This can give the reader a sense of the bias of the committee, should one exist.

If you believe that the committee did not adhere to its own guidelines during the review process, and you had pointed this out without satisfactory resolution, include a statement to this effect. Suppose, for example, some key information was missing from the protocol form and you felt an informed decision could not be made without it. If this was brought to the committee's attention and they elected to vote anyway, this should be mentioned in the report. If you feel the committee is in serious violation of its duties, you can try going through channels at that institution to resolve the situation. Should this fail, you should be prepared to alert the National Institutes of Health (NIH) about the situation. Documentation of serious lack of compliance in the review process is likely to result in an investigation and improvement of the situation.



Here are a couple of sample reports on real projects done at the University of California, Davis (the title, investigator and protocol number are fictitious):

The following are my reasons for voting against certain protocols during a meeting of the University of California, Davis, IACC:

Title: Ground squirrel control methods

Investigator: N.E. Faculty member
Protocol No.: 86-887

Species: California ground squirrel

Comments: 1) My major concern was that the ground squirrels would be subjected to severe unalleviated pain and suffering as a result of strychnine poisoning. I was disappointed that the investigator made light of this by stating that the level of pain was unknown, as numerous data show strychnine poisoning causes a horrible death for all mammals studied. The merit of the proposal did not outweigh the effects on the animals.

2) So-called "pest" animals have just as much right to live as do we and their control should be as humane as possible. Continued study of inhumane methods (e.g., strychnine poisoning) does little to encourage the search for alternatives.

Title: Sleep characteristics in primates

Investigator: R. U. Forreal

Protocol No.: 86-997

Species: Squirrel monkey

Comments: 1) The animals would have skull implants which may lead to variable degrees of discomfort depending partly on the care given the implant sites.

2) The knowledge to be gained probably would have little relevance to the human experience.

3) Some of the studies, perhaps a majority, could be done with human subjects. The investigator indicated that this would be "difficult" and more expensive, and would not allow as "nice" an integration of the behavioral and morphological data. Although this may be true, I felt the potential for improved relevancy of the data, combined with the improved ethical costs (*vis-a-vis* the effects on the monkeys, including deprivation of a normal life and early death), would have made the possibility of studying humans more attractive.

4) These primates are highly social animals whose well-being depends on interaction with others of their kind. In this study, they would be deprived of a normal or reasonable social existence by being housed in individual cages for an extended period.