
Minutes: AWERB

Status: Chair approved

Meeting held: Tuesday 23 April at 9.30am

Present

Attendees: 12 plus 1 in attendance, 3 by invitation, 3 apologies

1 PPL PRESENTATION

A project licence holder who was looking to apply for a new project licence to replace one that was due to expire was welcomed to the meeting.

The project licence holder explained that the aim of the work to be done under this project licence was to drive forward the understanding of the principles of musculoskeletal disease by understanding the complexities and limitations of regenerative techniques in this area and to investigate new materials that could be used to replace and regenerate musculoskeletal tissues.

One of the expected benefits of this licence was to increase the evidence for the use of novel materials that could be translated into new clinical devices. Results, which were not commercially sensitive, would be submitted for publication in suitable peer-review scientific journals.

The following objectives would be addressed:

- Determine the response of skeletal tissues to mechanical and biological stimulation.
- Define the integration of prosthetic implants with tissues.
- Develop strategies to regenerate skeletal tissues.

The work from the previous project licence had resulted in:

- 40 peer reviewed papers
- 10 to 12 PhD students who had worked on this study
- 5 clinical trials in units

Planned work under this project licence included taking data from this study and using it in a human clinical trial where minimally manipulated stem cells taken from the patient at the time of surgery would be sprayed back onto the surface of an implant to enhance osteointegration.

A future aim was to combat infections of these implants. It was crucial to seal the implant interface around the transcutaneous implants which would involve the development of new material and coating.

The following comments/suggestions were made:

- Editing was needed on the non-technical summary as the lay panel members had pointed out that some of the language was very specialised and that more effort was needed to couch the work in terms which would be understood by a lay person. A real hypothesis was needed and it needed to be more focused.

- The project licence had a lot of spelling mistakes and typos that needed to be corrected and sentences needed to be rewritten to ensure they made sense.
- Most of the protocols came across as a list of procedures which may or may not be done. It was not clear how many times an animal would be exposed to a procedure so this needed to be clarified. There were also a lot of optional procedures: was there a limit to the number of that each animal would be subjected to or could they experience all of them? If the latter, was there a risk that adverse effects could be worse than expected? It needed to be made clear that animals would only go through one surgical procedure. For the optional procedures, it was important to be aware of the cumulative effects on animals. A statement should be added to say that although animals may go through a number of these options, they would not go through them all. It should also say how frequently the animals would be blood sampled. A table should also be added showing the dosing levels and the period of time between dosing as the Home Office Inspector would be weighing up what each animal would go through cumulatively

It was agreed that these amendments would be made and the project licence recirculated. The project licence holder was thanked for attending the meeting.

2 BSU VIRTUAL TOUR – CAMDEN

This had been scheduled to be demonstrated at this meeting but it still needed to be finalised. The intention was to provide a demo at the June meeting.

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2019 were confirmed as an accurate record

4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Item 1: Amendment to PPL licence (March 2019 meeting)

Advice had been obtained on the antibiotic and circulated to AWERB along with the amended project licence. The licence had now been approved by the Home Office.

4.2 Item 4: update on project licence (March 2019 meeting):

A meeting had been held with the project licence holders to report back on AWERB discussions. It was decided that they would be allowed to do experiments on two more pigs but under strict conditions. A series of questions and conditions had been provided to them which was awaiting a response.

4.3 Item 2: new project licence (February 2019 meeting)

The question to the discussion groups asking if anyone was aware whether there have been any refinements of IP injections was yet to be submitted.

4.4 Item 2.2: PPL refresher training and culture of care workshop (February 2019 meeting)

Preliminary dates had been set. It would be a half day event. The PPL refresher training would focus on common themes at the RVC; renewal of project licences and ensuring that plenty of time allowed and standard conditions. It was hoped that this training would help improve the quality of project licence applications that were submitted as the team could provide advice on what the Home Office Inspector was looking for when reviewing applications.

4.5 Item 11: Schedule 1 register review (December 2018)

Prices for programmes that could be used for a training and schedule 1 register seemed to be very expensive, however it was possible that if there was a growing requirement for this type of programme that prices might come down. However, for now these were too expensive to consider.

4.6 Item 9: Attending other AWERB meetings (July 2018 meeting)

The AWERB Secretary had attended an AWERB meeting at another London institution. The following feedback was given: they meet three times a year; they were a smaller AWERB than the RVC with the AWERB Chair also being the secretary. They did a very focussed in depth review of a new project licence at the meeting with the project licence holder doing an initial general overview of the project licence followed by going through the project licence page by page. They were introducing having named role reports at their meetings. It was agreed that something similar should be introduced at the RVC. A standard template should be put together that could be used for the reports.

5 PROJECT LICENCE DUE TO EXPIRE

It was noted that a current project licence was due to expire the next day and a new replacement licence had not yet been applied for. Concern was expressed that despite reminders having been sent since the previous summer and having attended the February AWERB meeting to discuss his licence, this still had not submitted. Discussions had been held with the Home Office Inspector about the options available. A letter would also be sent to the project licence holder expressing concern that this situation had occurred.

The problem of project licence holders submitting project licence applications late was a common one and had been discussed in detail at a recent London AWERB Hub meeting. It was not fair on those project licence holders who submitted their applications in plenty of time but then had their applications delayed due to having to prioritise the late applications.

6 INFORMATION ABOUT VISIT

AWERB were informed of a visit by a researcher to a facility in Canada to observe how it was run as the facility had approached the RVC about a potential study. The researcher had been impressed with the facilities and they seemed to have the same core values at the RVC. A query was raised whether the facility had AAALAC accreditation so demonstrating their commitment to responsible animal care and use. This would be checked.

7 PRIORITIES THAT AWERB SHOULD FOCUS ON DURING THE NEXT 12 MONTHS

It had been suggested at the previous AWERB meeting that AWERB should set its own priorities and identify areas that would like to work and improve on during the next 12 months.

Previous priorities had been the environmental enrichment and the dog socialisation programme. The approach to reviewing project licences had been refined with the focus now being more on the 3Rs and welfare aspects, rather than being overrun by the science, as used to happen.

The following suggestions were made:

- A check list with step by step guidance on what to consider when reviewing project licences to be put together.
- Goal to offer research projects within the Unit that were welfare oriented. The Committee should identify some welfare aspect that they would like to have further information about and put forward a project that answered that question. For example a recent hot topic was the provision of cage space for rats and what could be done in providing space for climbing and standing.
- There should be a brainstorming session of the technicians together with the Animal Welfare Team to put together potential student projects.

8 DOG REHOMING PROGRAMME

The technician responsible for the dog rehoming programme was welcomed to the meeting. She explained that people who were interested in rehoming a dog were sent a questionnaire which included questions about lifestyle and the type of dog they were looking for. The aim was to match the dogs to the families. People were then invited in for an initial visit. They were observed with the dogs to determine the suitability of the match. If the family already had a dog then they were asked to bring the dog in too to see how the dogs got on. The aim was to find a forever home for the dogs.

Once the dogs had been matched to a family then they were given a welcome pack which included information; a bag of their food; treats and a vaccination card plus contact details of the NACWOs. The aim was to ensure that the families felt fully supported in their rehoming of the dogs.

So far 78 dogs have been rehomed.

A query was raised about how much the families knew about the history of the dogs. It was explained that during the initial consultation the families were informed that the dogs were part of a breeding colony of dogs that have the same muscular disease that can affect boys. The dogs that were being rehomed had not undergone any procedures. Copies of the Guardian article (<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2015/nov/15/beagles-study-hope-cure-muscular-dystrophy>) were provided where applicable. It was agreed that a pamphlet should be put together explaining the dogs' background.

There were some people who had made approaches to rehome the dogs who thought they were "rescuing the dogs" but when they saw the environment they were living in and their outdoor pens realised they were wrong and changed their views of what they thought research dogs were. A lot of the rehoming was done through word of mouth where people had rehomed dogs and then told friends about it.

The current system worked well with the number of dogs that were in the colony. AWERB were very impressed with the amount of effort that went into the rehoming programme, in particular ensuring that the dogs were matched to suitable homes depending on the personalities of the dogs and owners.

9 MEETINGS ATTENDED

9.1 PELH SPRING MEETING

A report from this meeting was given. There had been discussions about the effect that Brexit might have on animals in science and legislation. It was felt that it would not be too major however there would be some tweaks involving the EU directive. There were also concerns about the supply of animals post-Brexit that universities needed to look into.

The new ASPeL system was on schedule to be released by September. A mock up version was available on the internet for project licence holders who were planning on submitting a project licence from September 2019:

The Home Office had reported that the aim was to standardise the process to inspections and minor breaches/infringements. The focus would be on themed inspections, with a lot more questionnaires going out to help standardise approaches: for example ensuring that animals received adequate drink/food and checking who was responsible for providing this; reuse of needles; tunnel handling etc.

10 AMENDED PROJECT LICENCES APPROVED BY THE HOME OFFICE

AWERB noted that 3 project licence amendments had been approved by the Home Office.

11 ESTABLISHMENT LICENCE AMENDMENT

AWERB noted that the Establishment Licence had been amended: a new NACWO had been added and the temporary theatre procedure rooms had been removed, with one allocated as a dog kennel area.

12 MID TERM REVIEW

One mid-term review had been received. AWERB noted that a lot less animals were used in the project licence than had been initially estimated. The project licence holder had explained that this was due to the success of the ex vivo work meaning that there was no need to run extended studies in protocol 2. Although this was good that fewer animals had been required, it emphasised the importance of when reviewing project licences, in checking whether an element was definitely needed and also that using tissues allowed for less animals to be used.

AWERB were unsure whether work was continuing under the licence. If it wasn't then a request should be made to the Home Office for it to be revoked. A licence should not be kept simply because it was still in the duration period.

13 TRAINING RECORDS

The Unit records were being reviewed thoroughly. New users as part of their induction were given their training record and the requirements explained to them.

As the external lay panel member was very keen on this area and she had not been able to make this meeting, it was agreed that this item would be put on the agenda for the next meeting she was at in order to go through the training folder.

14 SCHEDULE 1 REGISTER REVIEW

It was confirmed that the Hawkshead Schedule 1 Register had been recently reviewed and checked.

15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1 Future attendance at AWERB

A query was asked whether it was possible for the junior technicians to attend the AWERB meetings to get experience of what was discussed there. AWERB were very supportive of this and it was agreed that one technician from each site should come along to each meeting.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 4 June 2019.

Secretary
29 April 2019