

MEDIA RELEASE

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Research funders and Government support UK strategy for non-human primate research

The UK's leading medical research organisations have published responses to the report by Sir David Weatherall FRS FMedSci on the use of non-human primates in research and have pledged support for a UK strategy for non-human primate research. This initiative has also received backing from the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir David King FRS.

The Weatherall report, released in December 2006, identified a strong case for maintaining work on non-human primates for defined questions of biological or medical importance.

Responses from the Academy of Medical Sciences, Wellcome Trust, Medical Research Council, Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council and Royal Society, support a more integrated approach to UK non-human primate research and welcome the development of a Government-led national strategy, bringing together government departments, scientists, industry, animal welfare organisations, regulators, research funders and other stakeholders.

The Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir David King FRS has welcomed the publication of the Weatherall report and expressed support for the development of this national strategy.

Sir David said: 'I welcome Professor Weatherall's valuable and independent contribution to what is a sensitive area. I accept his conclusion that there is a strong scientific case for the carefully regulated use of non-human primates where there are no other means to address clearly defined questions of particular biological or medical importance and I am proud that the UK has the skilled people to carry out this important work.'

'Although rare, the use of primates in medical research and testing is invaluable, as an essential aspect of work which provides the best hope for breakthroughs in

important areas such as neurodegenerative disorders and for aspects of immune and reproductive functions.

'The Government is considering carefully the Weatherall report and the issues it raises and will bring stakeholders together to develop a national strategy for the use of non-human primates in science.'

The strategy will consider improvements in networks between existing facilities and the establishment of specialised centres of excellence.

The responding organisations state their continued support for non-human primate research and commend the Weatherall report for providing a better documented basis for future debate. The organisations pledge to continue work with partners and stakeholders to implement the report's recommendations and to scrutinise progress in the coming years.

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Notes for Editors

The sponsoring organisations committed to respond to the Weatherall report's recommendations within 6 months of publication. **Full text of the response on behalf of all four sponsors and organisational responses can be obtained by e-mailing nick.hillier@acmedsci.ac.uk.**

The Weatherall report was released on the 11 December 2006. While the report was initiated and sponsored by the Academy of Medical Sciences, Royal Society, Medical Research Council and Wellcome Trust, members of the working group have worked independently. The four sponsoring organisations did not provide input into the report's content, conclusions or recommendations. The sponsors are committed to consider the report's recommendations and to formally respond within six months of publication.

The working group heard oral evidence from 35 individuals representing academia, animal welfare organisations, Government, industry, patients, research funders and other relevant bodies. The group received 62 written submissions from the UK and abroad and visited 4 UK primate research and breeding facilities.

Copies of the Weatherall report are available for download from <http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p118pressid19.html>

Sir David Weatherall Biography

Sir David Weatherall is one of Britain's most distinguished medical scientists. His outstanding career - with particular research interests in haematology and genetics - culminated in his appointment as Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford University in 1992. He was also founder Director of Oxford University's Institute of Molecular Medicine which bears his name. Throughout his career Sir David has taken a close interest in the application of breakthroughs in medical research to the developing world and, since his retirement in 2000, has been particularly active in this area, particularly in the Far East and Sri Lanka. Sir David has never personally undertaken any NHP research, but his extensive career has given him a broad understanding of the scientific issues involved.

Broadcast Footage

Broadcast quality footage of non-human primate breeding and research centers is available from the Coalition for Medical Progress <http://www.medicalprogress.org>. Please call 020 7921 0080 to request copies.