

Institutional statement on the use of research animals

The Instituto de Neurociencias (IN-CSIC-UMH) has joined the agreement on Openness on Animal Research, promoted from the Federation of Scientific Societies in Spain (COSCE), with the collaboration of the European Association of Research Animals (EARA), and launched on 20 September 2016.

We are certain that animal experimentation plays a fundamental role in the discover of the underlying biological mechanisms of disease, and in the developing of medical treatments. Without research in animals, we would not have most of the medicines, antibiotics, vaccines and surgical techniques that are applied nowadays in human and veterinary medicine.

An important part of the research undertaken at IN aims at contributing to the improvement of human health and wellbeing and is carried out thanks to the use of animals, for example our research projects are dealing with significant social problems: to understand the key factor involved in normal brain function to improve mental capacities and understand functional alterations underlying mental and neurodegenerative diseases, describe cellular and molecular mechanisms of cellular interactions and movements during brain development and cancer, as well as looking for new therapeutic approaches.

The welfare of animals used for research purposes is of paramount relevance for the IN, and also the strict compliance and respect to the current legislation on the protection of animals used in research and for other scientific purposes, including education. Our aim is to achieve the highest standards in animal welfare, not only from the point of view of our moral responsibility on them, but also because we are convinced we could not achieve research excellence without proper animal welfare. Our experiments with animals follow the legal standard and are assessed by an Ethics Committee on Animal Experimentation that promotes the use of alternative methods, the reduction in the number of animals used and the refinement in the experimental protocols applied. Not a single research project requiring the use of animals could start without the appropriate and required Ethics assessment and the eventual authorization from the competent authorities.

The IN also ensures that the personnel involved in animal care and researchers do have the adequate instruction and required professional skills, and that all resources are provided to properly keep research animals in terms of facilities, husbandry, wellbeing and veterinary care.

The IN has promoted/been involved in the following initiatives towards the Openness on Animal Research: diffusion articles in newspapers included our compromise with EARA, in the Brain Week open-doors way we show basic animal models to study the brain with some explanations about Ethics and animal management to ensure animal welfare.