

Proper Usage and Storage of Drugs and Medical Materials

The Animal Welfare Act and the Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals require research animals be provided with adequate veterinary care. The use of expired medical materials such as drugs, fluids or sutures or their improper storage is considered inadequate veterinary care. In addition, these management problems constitute a violation of the policies of the University of Rochester and the University's Animal Welfare Assurance with the Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW).

Medical materials intended for administration to animals such as drugs, fluids and sutures must be used within their shelf life. It does not matter if animals are used in survival or nonsurvival procedures. Outdated materials must be immediately discarded. In special circumstances in which drugs cannot be disposed of immediately, they must be labeled "expired" and segregated from other materials until proper disposition is possible. Containers of fluids that are injected into animals should have the date of first use written on them. Fluids that contain sugar (glucose, dextrose, etc.) should be discarded 12 hours after they are opened, because of their ability to support microbial life if contaminated. All other parenteral fluids should be discarded 14 days after their first use.

Drugs and fluids must also be stored in ways that will not affect their efficacy upon administration to animals. Improper storage of such materials includes the following: 1) storage in a dirty environment, e.g., permanent placement of a hypodermic needle in the top of a multi-dose vial 2) storage in an unsuitable environment, e.g., maintaining drugs intended for refrigeration at room temperature 3) storage of drugs in unlabeled containers or syringes and 4) unsecured storage of controlled substances.

Throughout the year, the University of Rochester is subject to unannounced inspections by two important governing agencies. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and New York State (NYS) inspectors visit animal housing areas, satellite facilities and laboratories where animals are taken. If outdated and/or improperly stored medical materials are identified, the institution may be cited for veterinary deficiencies.

This policy should be discussed with all laboratory personnel. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to establish laboratory procedures that ensure drugs intended for administration in animals are used appropriately. If you require assistance in this area, please contact the DLAM veterinary staff at X5-2651.

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