

Centre for Best Practice for Animals in Research (CBPAR)

Experimental design working group

Following an exploratory meeting in 2003, CBPAR* established a working group to discuss issues of experimental design for research involving animals. This discussion group includes members of funding bodies, government departments, animal welfare organisations, learned societies, the pharmaceutical industry and journal editors.

There have been two meetings of the main group, in November and April.

At the first meeting many issues were discussed, including training. Of particular interest to statisticians are two initiatives that the group agreed that relate to the methodological quality of research using animals, each of which is being taken forward by a working group. (I am on both working groups.)

1. To carry out a survey reviewing the quality of experimental design in a sample of published papers acknowledging NIH or any UK funding body.

The protocol for the survey is nearly finalised. Each paper will be studied independently by two statisticians (one in UK and one in US) and assessed using a pre-piloted form, to gather information on the design, analysis and reporting.

2. To develop recommendations for reporting research using animals in journal articles.

The aim is to produce a set of recommendations relating to the design, analysis and reporting of studies using animals. It is likely that the guidelines would follow a similar style to CONSORT and other reporting guidelines developed for clinical research. As the main focus will be on experimental studies, the CONSORT statement for reporting randomised trials in humans is a relevant model for comparative studies.

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* <http://www.mrc.ac.uk/public-cbpar>