Public Opinion Says Fraud in Science is High, Use of Lab Animals is OK

A random sample of 1,500 adults shows that the majority of Americans believe there is a fair amount of scientific fraud by medical researchers, that the use of laboratory animals is necessary for medical progress, and that funding for research should stay about the same.

The survey by the Gallup Organization was commissioned by the American Medical Association.

In response to questions as to scientific fraud or misrepresentation, 41% said that they believed "a fair amount of fraud" is occurring in medical research, and another 17% said that "a lot of fraud" exists. Thirty percent said that they believed there was little or almost no fraud happening in scientific research.

As for the use of laboratory animals in research, the majority of the respondents agreed that animal models are necessary for medical progress and support the use of animals for such purposes, including unwanted pound animals.

In general terms two out of three respondents (64%) support the use of animals in research, of which more than one-half of the supporters (36%) said they "strongly support" such research. Of the 29% opposed to the use of animals in research, 23% said they "strongly oppose" such research. However, some of the opposition must be in principle, inasmuch as 77% of the respondents also said that animal research is necessary for progress in medicine. Also, 71% favored allowing researchers to use animals that otherwise would be euthanized at the pounds.

Support for animal research geographically is very high in the Pacific and Rocky Mountain regions (71%) and low in the New England, Middle Atlantic, and East South Central States (58%).

As for federal funding of research projects, 50% said current levels are adequate and should be maintained, and 37% said that funding should be increased. Four percent said such funding should be decreased.

ILAR Sets New Guidelines for Precollege Lab Animal Use

The National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources (ILAR) has issued new principles and guidelines for the use of animal in precollege education.

The ILAR guidelines are more stringent than are the widely used guidelines of the National Science Teachers Association. ILAR Chairman Steven Pakes said the guidelines are more in line with the use of animals in medical school education, adding, "The point isn't to stop all inquiry. This issue is the appropriate use of animals at that [precollege] level."

ILAR, which is a part of the Academy's National Research Council, views the guidelines as a means of stimulating students and teachers to consider alternatives to experiments with animals and to plan more carefully when animals are studied.

Guidelines

The humane study of animals in precollege education can provide important learning experiences in science and ethics and should be encouraged. Maintaining classroom pets in preschool and grade school can teach respect for other species, as well as proper animal husbandry practices. Introduction of secondary school students to animal studies in closely supervised settings can reinforce those early lessons and teach the principles of humane care and use of animals in scientific inquiry. The National Research Council recommends compliance with the following principles whenever animals are used in precollege education or in science fair projects.

PRINCIPLE I: Observational and natural history studies that are not intrusive (that is, do not interfere with an animal's health or well-being or cause it discomfort) are encouraged for all classes of organisms. When an intrusive study of a living organism is deemed appropriate, consideration should be given first to using plants (including lower plants such as yeast and fungi) and invertebrates with no nervous systems or with primitive ones (including protozoa, planaria, and insects). Intrusive studies of invertebrates with advanced nervous systems (such as octopi) and vertebrates should be used only when lower invertebrates are not suitable and only under the conditions stated below in *Principle X.*

PRINCIPLE II: Supervision shall be provided by individuals who are knowledgeable about and experienced with the health, husbandry, care, and handling of the animal spe-