DRAFT

CONFIDENTIAL MATERIAL

THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BODY (AWERB)

2nd July 2020 (via Zoom) – additional meeting

MINUTES

Present:

20/07-01	Apologies
20/07-02	Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 4th June 2020 were considered by the Committee and were approved subject to some minor amendments.

20/07-03	Matters Arising 20/01-05 Suggestion of including a statistician. No-one has yet been identified, and this will remain on the agenda. 20/06/04 Chair to send a reminder email to all licence applicants regarding the expectations of the AWERB Committee for presenting their licence application focussing on ethical issues.
20/07-04	Chairperson's Items No items for discussion.
20/07-05	Verbal Reports from the Director of BMSU and Named Persons BMSU is now operational with limited capacity following changes in the mode of operation. The transition to a new way of working is progressing well. Staff have been retained as two teams and will continue a two-team operation as long as required. Access is restricted to 2 people per project licence. BMSU are further ahead with recommencement of research compared to other comparable University facilities. Counselling has been offered to Technical staff who were anxious regarding the level of necessary culling which was carried out prior to lockdown. There are no issues regarding animal health and welfare.
20/07-06	Report from the Fast Track Procedure Fast track procedures are in progress as normal and no queries had been raised.
20/07-07-1	Project Licence Applications *a) Immune responses in murine models of cancer* Summary: • The aim of this project is to understand how immune responses and disease progression are altered by immunotherapies in different models of human cancer. • The project also aims to identify markers that predict T cell responsiveness to immunotherapy • This new proposal seeks to extend findings from how regulatory pathways activated during tolerance may also act to control T cell exhaustion in cancer. • Given that most patients do not respond to immune checkpoint blockade therapy, there is an unmet need to understand the complex immunological consequences of checkpoint blockade. • Identifying early biomarkers of checkpoint inhibitor sensitivity would greatly aid in clinical management. The Committee stated that there have been some amendments to the application following discussion between the NVS, BMSU NACWO and the PI. A discussion took place regarding pathway blockage, and the identification of molecules which trigger a response. Colorectal Cancer was discussed, and whether endoscopy measurements would be more suitable, but it was

	stated that the anatomical location of the tumour prevented it. The model proposed is a standard model which is already running well in BMSU. The Committee stated that the application needs to show that pilot studies are included so that it is clear which direction further research will progress. Tumour size and burden will be assessed at the various time points to ensure tumours only grow to a size where T cell activity is measurable. It was confirmed that if the animals show signs of prolonged discomfort, the animals will be taken off treatment for a period of time without impacting the science. NTS – page 81 needs to remove names and correct typos which will be resolved by suitable amendments within the body of the application. The Committee stated that there should be regular reviews of the protocols to allow for refinements and amendments as techniques and models develop. **Decision: Committee agreed that further discussions are needed between the NVS, BMSU, NACWO and PI. The project will be re-circulated for electronic approval and then sent to the HOI.**
20/07-07-2	*b) Protecting and repairing injured retinal ganglion cells* <u>Summary:</u> • Traumatic optic nerve injury affects 2-5% of people worldwide, with 0.5-5% also occurring in patients with head injuries, whilst 60 million people are affected by glaucoma, leading to loss of vision and eventual blindness. • All of the above conditions cause death of retinal ganglion cells, neurons that form the optic nerve and relay visual information to the brain. • Currently there are no therapeutic agents that promote neuroprotection and axon regeneration after injury or disease to the optic nerve and hence blindness results. • The aim of this project is to understand the factors that cause death of retinal ganglion neurons and prevent their axons from regenerating after injury. • This project will identify and test effective therapeutic targets and agents that will protect neurons, particularly retinal ganglion cells, from death and promote their axons to regenerate after injury, ultimately protecting against visual function loss. The Committee stated that the presentation was well explained, but this was not translated in the application which needs more details of protocols. The application needs more protocols to describe the procedures in more detail. The species decision making needs to be included i.e. why the use of rats over mice. Rats actually exhibit similar responses to humans, whereas mice do not. The Committee discussed unilateral rather than bilateral eye testing. **Action:** The applicant was asked to discuss with a statistician about the number of animals used. The Committee stated that unilateral tests would be preferable. Techniques should be influenced by the science, especially as eyes are not independent units. It was advised that the PI discusses numbers with a statistician. Discussions were undertaken between retinal injury and optic nerve crush injury models. Splitting the injuries into separate protocols would be beneficial. The NTS needs to more accessible which will be addressed. **Decision: Committee agree that more discussion is needed between NVS, BMSU, NACWO and PI. The project will be re-circulated to the Committee**
20/07-08	Matters relating to the 3Rs NC3Rs Webinars include: • 3Rs advice for project licence applicants – Thursday 9th July at 2pm • Scientific validity and EURL ECVAM recommendations for the replacements for animal-derived antibodies – Wednesday 29th July 2pm A full list of events can be found here: https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/events

	• The BMSU Assistant Director has provided 3Rs advice on five funding applications including one for the NC3Rs. • They confirmed that they will also be attending the NC3Rs seminar on replacing the use of animals when generating antibodies. 3Rs working group activities: • The new 3Rs working group will be announced in the next BMSU newsletter including a list of 3Rs champions as local points of contact. A 3Rs email address has also been requested through IT. • The RSPCA have recently published some advisory documents, two of which fall within the remit of the working group. The recommendations are being discussed by the group to determine if there are any additional measures that can be implemented at Birmingham. • The NC3Rs e-learning modules contain some excellent videos that can be used for training in performing welfare observations. The group agreed this would be beneficial in the training of new staff/students, so a training session will be designed with the support of the BMSU technicians. • Following a discussion about the pros and cons of clips and sutures (at both 3Rs Working Group and Named Persons meeting) it was confirmed that the NVS will review how wound closure techniques are being utilised within BMSU. At a future date a suture master class will also be held by the Deputy NVS to support alternative methods where appropriate
20/07-09	Any Other Business Technician on a FTC has now been made permanent.
20/07-10	Date of Next Meeting The date of the next meeting will be 23rd July 2020 at 10.00am, venue TBC, although there may be an additional meeting.

GLOSSARY

3Rs	Replacement, Reduction and Refinement
AWERB	Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body
BMSU	Biomedical Services Unit
CRC	Colorectal Cancer
EURL ECVAM	European Union Reference Laboratories for Alternatives to Animal Testing
FTC	Fixed Term Contract
HOI	Home Office Inspector
IT	Information Technology
NC3Rs	National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research
NACWO	Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer
NTS	Non-Technical Summary
NVS	Named Veterinary Surgeon
PI	Principal Investigator
PPLs	Project Licences
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
T Cell	A type of white blood cell which develops in the thymus gland
UoB	University of Birmingham