

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Missile trauma in dogs

Dear Sir,

It has been 5 years since we wrote a Letter to the Editor (*Dent Traumatol* 2003; 20: 109) expressing concern about the humane use of experimental animals in studies published in *Dental Traumatology*. We pointed out that it is customary for publications of studies involving animal experimentation to mention Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee approval. At the time we wrote "We trust that the Editorial Board of *Dental Traumatology* is in support of the humane treatment of experimental animals and it would be appropriate to mention this in the guidelines for authors." To date, the guidelines for authors regrettably still do not include any wording referring to animal experimentation.

We are prompted to address this issue again because of a recent publication (*Dent Traumatol* 2008; 24: 633–639) documenting the extremely harsh treatment of experimental animals. Eighteen relatively small dogs were subjected to a crude experiment, involving a 6-mm ball-bearing being shot through the mandibles, causing a comminuted fracture. The dogs were kept alive for up to 4 weeks. The paper mentions the instability of the bone fragments and pulpal changes, yet no mention is made of pain assessment and management, immobilization or dietary modifications.

This paper has many more shortcomings, so much so that one wonders whether somehow it has missed the benefit of editorial review altogether. The readership of *Dental Traumatology* deserves better.

Sincerely,

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To Drs Verstraete and Tsugawa,

Thank you for your letter concerning the important issue of humane use of experimental animals. You can be assured that the editorial board is in complete support of the requirement of humane treatment of all animals used in research. It is, however, not possible to verify if the standards for human and animal research in various countries are followed. As you will understand, we must accept in good faith when researchers state that expected standards with regards to humane handling of animals have been applied. As with other scientific journals, we require that all authors submitting manuscripts to *Dental Traumatology* online must answer in the affirmative to a statement "confirming that all research has been carried out in accordance with legal requirements of the study country such as approval of ethical committees for human and/or animal research or other legislation where applicable."

I have contacted the principal investigator and corresponding author Dr Ren and asked him to describe in more detail the management of the experimental dogs. The author has answered by email that there is an ethical committee involved and that the animals were sedated during and after the experiments. Dr. Ren has been asked to write a letter in response to your letter of concern, but we have not yet (16 Feb., 2009) received his response. We plan to publish the authors' response when we receive that. In the meantime, so as not to delay your letter to the editor we will publish your letter and the Editor in Chief's comment.

In order to further improve this important ethical and quality of research issue, we will in the future publish even more detailed instructions on our journal's web page where the guidelines for authors can be found. We will also encourage submission of articles regarding animal research methodology and ethics.

Once again, thank you for bringing this issue to our attention.

Sincerely,

Lars Andersson
Editor in Chief

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