

Background

To advance understanding of serious health conditions and develop effective treatments for those affected, it is important to understand the basic principles of biology and the events that trigger diseases like Alzheimer's disease. The relative inaccessibility of the human brain, as well as the slow progression of these diseases, poses real challenges to scientists trying to study the causes of dementia. To answer these important questions, researchers use a range of methods involving cells, computer models, human tissue and volunteers. It is sometimes also necessary to use animals, although only in situations where other methods would not suffice.

Research using animals has produced some of the most important findings in the field to date and made real progress in the fight against dementia. Any new treatment designed for humans must, by law, be tested in animals before being tested in human volunteers and people affected by dementia. The most common animals used in dementia research are fruit flies and mice.

Our Policy

Experiments that involve animals are an important part of medical research. We will fund it only where there is clear potential of benefiting people affected by dementia and where the principles below have been demonstrated. Furthermore, we fund research involving animals only where there are no feasible alternatives, and their use is strictly regulated by the [Home Office](#) under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Approximately one third of the research projects we currently fund involve animals. The use of animals in research is not taken lightly and we adhere to a series of principles called the 3Rs, through which we work to:

- Replace the use of animals with non-animal alternatives
- Reduce the number of animals used to the minimum consistent with the scientific objectives
- Refine the way experiments are carried out, to maximise animal welfare. This includes better housing and care, and improvements to procedures in situations where the use of animals is unavoidable.

Review and funding processes

Alzheimer's Research UK is committed to ensuring that our policy on animal research is implemented effectively, particularly with respect to the 3Rs. This is important not only from an ethical perspective, but also due to the scientific benefits of ensuring appropriate models are used, that experiments are scientifically robust and reproducible, and that unnecessary pain or distress do not confound research studies.

• Funding conditions

It is a condition of funding that researchers working with animals act strictly in accordance with law and comply with cross-funder guidance documents published by the NC3Rs, in particular

'Responsibility for the use of animals in bioscience research' and the [ARRIVE Guidelines for reporting animal-based studies](#). Should Alzheimer's Research UK fund work involving non-human primates (NHPs), this will also be on condition that the research complies with the NC3Rs Guidelines: Non-Human [Primate Accommodation, Care and Use](#).

We will fund research involving animals only where we are satisfied that:

- The study design is scientifically robust and the animal model is appropriate and relevant to the research question being addressed;
- The sex of the animals is specified in the experimental design. We expect both sexes to be used unless there is robust justification in the research proposal for single-sex studies (such as purely molecular interactions, single sex mechanisms or scarce resources);
- There are no feasible alternatives;
- All reasonable efforts have been made to minimise the number of animals used and to optimise their welfare
- All animal work will be done in strict compliance with local ethics committee requirements (in the UK, the Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body), sector standards and applicable law including, in the UK, the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, as amended 2012.
- Welfare standards are consistent with those of UK legislation, and the principles in the guidance documents above are applied and maintained, even where the funded research is to be performed outside of the UK;
- The research has been successfully independently peer reviewed.

• **Grant application requirements**

Applicants who request funding for research involving animals must provide detailed information to allow appropriate evaluation of the proposed research. This includes clear justification for the species, sex, type and number of animals to be used and the experimental design and statistical analyses. Applicants proposing to use non-human primates, cats, dogs or equines, which are specially protected species, or other large animals, such as pigs, may be asked to provide additional information regarding welfare. Alzheimer's Research UK will only support the use of specially protected species for toxicology and safety pharmacology studies, required for safety or regulatory purposes.

• **Peer review**

All research involving animals is rigorously reviewed by appropriately qualified independent scientific experts. Where a research proposal involves the use of specially protected species or other large animals this will also include additional [specialist 3Rs review](#) by the NC3Rs. Funding may be conditional on the applicant addressing any concerns or 3Rs opportunities raised by the NC3Rs.

- Alzheimer's Research UK will review the use of specially protected species and other large animals on a case-by-case basis. Following favourable scientific peer-review, the Alzheimer's Research UK Senior Leadership Team will provide a recommendation to Trustees in the context of the potential impact that research could have on the risks for the organisation as a whole.

Openness on animal research

In May 2014 Alzheimer's Research UK signed the Concordat on [Openness on Animal Research in the UK](#), alongside 120 other organisations. Together, we have committed to enhancing our communication about the use of animals in research.

Further information

Alzheimer's Research UK is a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), and supports the AMRC's [position statement](#) on using animals in research.

For further information, Alzheimer's Research UK's booklet [Why research using animals can help defeat dementia](#) provides information about the role of animals in dementia research.

We can restrict any donation to non-animal research projects on request. You simply need to let us know when making a [donation](#).

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