

It is not just in Great Britain that such interest is being taken in the welfare of livestock and in intensive husbandry systems. Within the Council of Europe, the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes, applies to the keeping, care and housing of all domestic farm animals, and in particular to animals in modern intensive stock farming systems. This Convention has been ratified by a number of member countries including the UK, and a common approach by the European Economic Community countries is expected.

Articles 3 and 4 of the Convention state: "environmental conditions shall conform to the animals' physiological and ethological needs in accordance with established experience and scientific knowledge." That must always be our aim.

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## NSMR: Its Image, Direction and Future

J. Russell Lindsey

**The following speech was presented by Dr. Lindsey, Chairman of the University of Alabama Department of Comparative Medicine, at the Annual Board Meeting of the National Society for Medical Research (NSMR), Chicago, Illinois, November 10, 1979.**

I would like to begin by stating two fundamental beliefs which have served as guiding principles throughout my professional career:

1. I am absolutely committed to the principle that animal research *is* in the best interest of *both* man and animals. (I have had the unusual experience of observing some of the earliest research on the defibrillator done in animals, and later seeing this instrument used to prolong my father's life by eight years. Similarly, I have seen light years of progress in medical care for animals since I graduated from veterinary school twenty years ago.)
2. I am equally committed to the principle that *all* animals used in research should be treated humanely throughout the research process. (Some people erroneously believe that a majority of animal research projects involve pain and suffering. I know from personal experience that when trained professionals are willing to invest the time, effort and ingenuity, most legitimate research objectives can be accomplished without pain and suffering.)

Now to the topic at hand, the "image, direction and future" of NSMR. It seems to me that the organization's present image can be appreciated only as

one sees it in historical perspective. This is necessary because the present image has its roots firmly implanted in the distant past.

For our purposes here I would like to briefly summarize some of the more important events of the past which have contributed to the present posture of NSMR. In doing so, however, I would like to emphasize certain realities usually not accepted by NSMR.

In the late 1860's there appeared in Great Britain an upsurge of public resentment toward a variety of highly questionable animal research practices. This movement began gaining momentum about 1870 and snowballed into passage of the British Cruelty to Animals Act in 1876. Although many blatant acts of animal cruelty in laboratories were exposed, the scientific community persisted in its defensive posture until passage of the British Act became a moral imperative in the public view (Ryan, 1963; Dennis, 1966).

A second, much smaller, snowball of public resentment occurred in the U.S. in the late 1890's when Senator Jacob H. Gallinger attempted for three consecutive years to have Congress enact a similar law. Through a magnificent defensive campaign, reaching from Washington to grass roots America, William Henry Welch almost single-handedly defeated Senator Gallinger and his following (Flexner and Flexner, 1941).

A third and major snowball of public resentment surfaced in the U.S. in the early 1960's, and despite the defensive efforts of NSMR, led to passage of our Animal Welfare Act, its subsequent amendment, and the addition of several new rules through the Animal Welfare Act's built-in mechanism for bureaucratic law-making. Fortunately, and again despite NSMR's defensive efforts, the standards promulgated thus far under the Animal Welfare Act have had a very positive effect—beneficial to good science, to animals and to scientists.

The point I wish to emphasize is that NSMR, like all of its predecessors representing the scientific community, has consistently maintained a defensive posture while claiming that *all* practices of animal use and care within the biomedical community have been "lily white." In my judgment, this has been a major tactical error because abuses of freedoms to use animals in research too frequently have been and continue to be common knowledge (e.g., *Science*, Editorial, 1976). NSMR's complete unwillingness to face up to these realities and to respond positively to the public's legitimate concerns has led to the inevitable loss of credibility and steady decline in influence.

To compound the problem further, NSMR has rigidly followed the erroneous concept that all who speak out for the humane interests of animals are arch enemies of medical progress. Such persons have been uniformly labeled by NSMR as members of the radical fringe—"antivivisectionists" or "sentimentalists" (Visscher, 1972). This too has been a major tactical error because it means that in reality, NSMR has served as a major force in polarizing the various factions representing antagonists and protagonists of animal research. In the process, many of the most ardent would-be supporters of NSMR have been alienated. The net result has been an organization with a posture generally viewed as counter-productive, and as a consequence, operating in an ever-diminishing sphere of friends and influence.

At this point I would like to speak to the question of the future of NSMR. Although many scientists and other colleagues are beginning to ask whether the

organization has a future at all, I am convinced that because of the enormous pressures facing animal research today, from an avalanche of bureaucratic red tape, from inflation and tightening financial constraints, and from other forces, effective leadership from an organization such as NSMR is needed in the U.S. now as never before. I hasten to add, however, that the organization's future effectiveness will depend on whether or not it is willing to undergo dramatic change. What changes are needed? What should be the elements of NSMR's program for the future?

1. *The NSMR should develop an offensive program, a positive rather than a negative posture:*
  - a) New and imaginative leadership is desperately needed, and may be the key ingredient. That leadership must forget about the old clichés and archaic arguments of the past and begin communicating effectively with all parties concerned.
  - b) The positive program would seek to make NSMR a rallying point for all animal research interests, a major center for disseminating information and coordinating efforts of all groups. At the same time, however, NSMR must never assume that it has a role as the *only* spokesman for medical research.
  - c) The positive program must at all costs avoid territorialism, factionalism and criticism of other groups. As an example here, I would suggest that the newly-formed Research Animal Alliance (RAA) should have been received with outstretched arms, and the services of NSMR offered in the interest of close cooperation.
  - d) The positive program seeks to identify problems ahead of time and to solve them before they undergo the snowball effect.
  
2. *The NSMR should diligently seek to eliminate the reasons for criticisms of animal research:*
  - a) The first step is to admit that there are serious problems.
  - b) All research institutions should be encouraged to seek AAALAC accreditation, or otherwise subject their facilities and laboratory animal programs to careful scrutiny by professionals competent to judge their quality, using the National Institutes of Health *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* as a basic standard.
  - c) In particular, the NIH should be encouraged to improve its intramural animal care facilities and bring them uniformly up to standards of the *Guide*. It borders on being a national disgrace that NIH expects AAALAC accreditation of extramural programs but does not take this matter seriously for its in-house operations.
  - d) An effort should be made to upgrade substandard facilities throughout the country. Although the Animal Resources Branch of NIH has a program of this type, its funding has always been inadequate. NSMR should wage a campaign to double the appropriation for these purposes at NIH.
  - e) A serious effort should be made to increase the number of trained professionals to deliver quality animal care. Again, the appropria-

tion of the Animal Resources Branch of NIH is grossly inadequate in the area of postdoctoral training for veterinarians in laboratory animal medicine. NSMR should campaign to have it doubled as well.

- f) Improved training opportunities should be encouraged for research investigators and research technicians. The time has passed when anyone can be permitted to walk into an animal facility and begin doing complicated procedures on animals. NSMR should spearhead a program to improve training opportunities at medical research institutions all over the country.

3. *The NSMR must develop mechanisms for effectiveness at the grass roots level:*

For many years it has seemed to me that NSMR has cast itself in a very difficult, if not impossible role. The reality of the situation is that a central, office-based organization such as NSMR cannot defend freedoms to use animals in research. It must be done on a day-to-day basis in every institution where animals are used. In the past, too many institutions have been willing to pay their dues to NSMR and forget about any further responsibility for quality animal care. NSMR must actively develop or assist in developing local, positive programs for defending its causes. NSMR should encourage scientists at all levels to become involved in humane societies at the local, state and national level. The truth of the matter is that extremists, like the "2%" in any organization, are a small minority. Many of their well meaning but radical positions are the result of ignorance. NSMR should accept this reality and diligently seek to work with all parties. Above all else, an effort should be made to encourage constructive dialogue rather than polarization of groups.

4. *The NSMR must continue and expand its lobbying activities.*

The need for these activities at the local, state and national levels continues to proliferate. Therefore, the demands on NSMR in this area will probably increase. Its success in the many new areas under consideration currently, such as transportation guidelines and all kinds of environmental standards, will probably depend increasingly on its ability to use specialists in numerous fields, and to work closely with groups such as the Institute of Laboratory Animal Resources, the Research Animal Alliance and others.

In closing, I would like to quote from the final paragraph which appeared in Dr. Maurice Visscher's article entitled "The Newer Antivivisectionists": "Eternal vigilance is the price, not only of personal liberty, but of progress in biological science..." (Visscher, 1972).

I agree with Dr. Visscher. Vigilance is important. But, I am absolutely convinced that if NSMR is going to be effective in the future, it must do much more than maintain a vigilant, defensive posture. As Dr. Visscher points out in his most recent article on animal rights and alternative methods (Visscher, 1979), "...oppo-