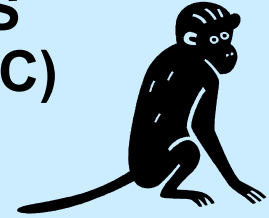




LIBRARY SUPPORT OF AN ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER'S INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL CARE AND USE COMMITTEE (IACUC)



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Objective

To illustrate how building a communication network between an academic medical center's library and its Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) can lead to specialized reference services that aid institutions in meeting the information requirements of the Animal Welfare Act.

Methods

The Animal Welfare Act requires investigators to submit – along with their experimental protocol – a search strategy showing that they have performed a comprehensive search of the literature for alternatives to animal use in their research.

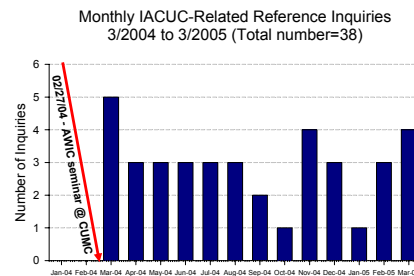
To facilitate investigators' understanding of the requirements, our institution's IACUC organized a one day (02/27/04) Animal Welfare Information Center (AWIC) training seminar. A Technical Information Specialist from AWIC presented a lecture and ran an afternoon hands-on searching session.

The AWIC specialist and medical center librarians worked together prior to the seminar to determine what databases and resources researchers had access to via the medical center's library. The AWIC specialist recommended to the director of IACUC to incorporate the medical center librarians into the afternoon searching segment of the course, where they gained exposure to researchers and highlighted the library's resources and services.

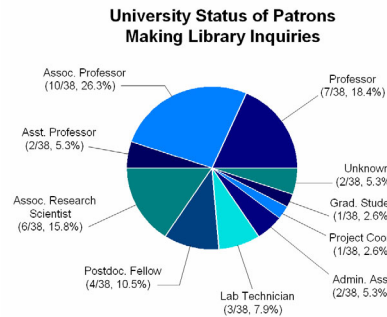
Results

During the twelve months prior to the IACUC seminar, no requests for help with searching for alternatives were recorded by the Reference Department of the library. Due to the increased visibility of the medical center library's resources and services, within two days of the IACUC seminar, the Reference Department recorded its first request.

To date, thirteen months subsequent to the IACUC seminar, the library has received 38 requests for assistance with searching for alternatives to animal use in research. Demographic information about users seeking assistance has been collected on a continuous basis and analyzed.



Seminar attendance and word of mouth played a big role in how patrons initially found out about the library's expert search service. After the first month, however, inquiries were made (on average ~3 per month) via direct referral from IACUC. The referrals were primarily sent as part of IACUC's protocol renewal notices and protocol rejection notices. Notices included librarian contact information and extensive details about the library's training classes.

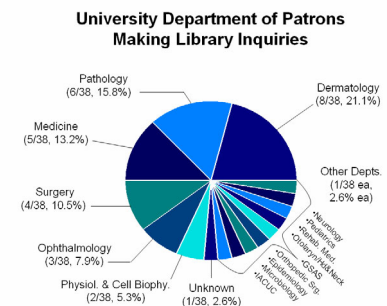


Who Came for Library Assistance?

50% of the 38 IACUC-related reference inquiries were made by Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) faculty members (themselves).

26% (or 10 out of the total inquiries) originated from Associate Research Scientists and Postdoctoral Fellows, while only one student (involved in laboratory research at the graduate level) made an IACUC-related inquiry.

Only 16% of inquiries were made by technicians, administrative assistants, and project coordinators on behalf of faculty members. Most faculty members preferred to deal directly with librarians.



IACUC-related inquiries were made by patrons from a wide variety of CUMC departments. Depts that surpassed the others – in number of inquiries made – were Dermatology and Pathology.

The relatively high number of inquiries made by these departments may be related to IACUC's protocol review schedule. Word of mouth & satisfaction with the library service may also have played a role (eg. one Dermatology faculty member has returned for search assistance on three different protocols).

Discussion

Research faculty and research scientists are two demographic groups that are not traditionally big users of the library's specialized search services. CUMC students, clinical faculty and residents are more likely to be the ones seeking out the search expertise of their local librarians.

How IACUC Patrons Differ From Others

- Working under huge time constraints; IACUC review impacts their ability to get experimental protocol accepted
- Have higher university status (faculty & researchers; generally not their students, assistants, or technicians)
- Search for alternatives is mandated by law (Animal Welfare Act)
- Require high level of discretion due to sensitivity of experimental info
- Have high level of frustration; generally seek librarian's help with search only after having own search efforts rejected by IACUC
- Eager to learn how to search for alternatives by themselves

Conclusions

The search for alternatives requires a high-level of expertise. Researchers have a need for assistance in developing their search strategies (with database & terminology selection, etc). Via referral from IACUC, researchers will contact a librarian. Networking with IACUC is, therefore, an effective way of reaching these patrons – and boosting the library's specialized reference/expert search services.

Future Directions

- Lobby to have a permanent librarian representative serve on IACUC
- Market this new expert search service more widely (eg. via the library's website, etc.)
- Continue to provide instruction on the use of electronic databases to search for alternatives
- Create educational/training materials (print and online) to support patrons who seek to develop more sophisticated search skills on their own
- Share our experience conducting IACUC-related searches with our professional colleagues

References

- Animal Welfare Information Center, US Dept. of Agriculture, National Agriculture Library
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- Wood, M.W. and Hart, L.A. *Searching for the 3Rs: Facilitating Compliance in the Bibliographic Search For Alternatives.* INSPEL 35(2001) 3, pp.191-198.