

## **Policy statement on the use of animals in research**

Better health is a vital component of the vision Help the Aged has of a future where older people are highly valued, have lives that are richer and voices that are heard.

Research into Ageing is a special trust within Help the Aged. It was founded in 1976 and funds research into the most common illnesses affecting older people including mobility problems, dementia, bone disease, wound healing, stroke and heart disease.

As a member of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC), Research into Ageing is committed to avoiding the use of animals in research wherever possible. We will not fund animal research unless it is essential and there is no alternative. Most of the research that we fund is carried out on tissue samples or cells in a laboratory, with computers or on volunteers. However, these methods cannot yet replace research involving animals. Strict laws and instructions from the Home Office rightly control the use of animals in research and Research into Ageing will only fund research that adheres to these standards\*.

The Association of Medical Research Charities supports and encourages the use of alternatives to animals in research however the vast majority of scientists agree that we still need to use animals at some stages of research. This is a position that is also supported by the Government.

Many major advances in medical treatments would have been impossible without animal research. Hip replacement surgery, heart bypass operations and the meningitis and polio vaccines are just a few examples. Help the Aged wants to tackle the barriers to a healthy old age and so Research into Ageing funds projects that aim to understand the biology of conditions like osteoporosis and Alzheimer's. Improving our understanding will enable researchers to design better treatments or even prevent conditions from developing in the first place. Biomedical research is a vital and powerful tool to improve our health in later life.

Research into Ageing follows AMRC guidance and uses strict criteria when we are selecting which research to fund. We seek advice from independent referees to ensure that the research is well designed, unique and will deliver useful information for improving the health of older people. Any proposed use of animals is scrutinised at this stage. We will only fund research that uses animals when there is no alternative and the potential research results have been judged to be suitably valuable and necessary.

Help the Aged appreciates that many people have strong, personal opinions about animal research and we respect their views.

\*the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986