Expertise & Advocacy in Animal Welfare Decision-Making

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What Animals Want

Expertise and Advocacy in Laboratory Animal Welfare Policy

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• Ethics
• Facts
• Values
• Epistemology
• Animal welfare
• Regulation
• Professional turf
• Rhetoric
• Veterinarians
• Objectivity
working definitions:

“Advocacy” – promoting a course of action

• Large scale: law and policy

• Small scale: individual patient

• In-between scale: IACUC protocols
“Animal Welfare”

What our prior speakers said about mind, body and natural behavior, PLUS positive valences (joys, fulfillment) that go beyond the ‘natural’ and the not-unhealthy
• Empirical Fact +
• Considered Values ➔
• Normative prescription
Facts, Values, “Prescriptions”

Normative “prescriptions” (what *ought* we to do):

What animal welfare laws to pass?  
What practices does AVMA promote?  
What requirements in an IACUC protocol?  
What do we do with *this* animal?
Facts, Values, “Prescriptions”

Two Common Errors:

1) Opinions are personal, fact-independent, and cannot be analyzed.
2) “Science-based” facts can be the basis of normative prescriptions and can deliver us from values & opinions.

Facts PLUS Values $\rightarrow$ Prescription
Two tasks for every vet student (and vet)

1. Develop *informed* set of values about animals
Two tasks for every vet student (and every vet)

1. Develop informed set of values about animals

Everyone who makes decisions about animals has this task: vets, companion animal guardians, farmers, vet nursing techs, researchers, consumers, hunters, tax-payers.
for example . . .

“Causing pain or suffering to a sentient other requires justification.”
for example . . .

“Causing pain or harm to a sentient other requires justification.”

This is neither complete, nor universally held, but it’s a start.
“Causing pain or harm to a sentient other requires justification.”

Incomplete without:

- addressing species (equality of consideration -- Singer 1975)
- defining killing (harm or no-harm?)
- naming valid types of justification (e.g.: self-defense, surgery (or other therapeutic procedures), medical research, tasty burgers, essential protein)
“Causing pain or harm to a sentient other requires justification.”

Incomplete without:
• addressing species covered
• defining killing (as harm v no-harm?)
• proportionality
• naming valid types of justification

• And answering associated fact questions

(Peralta, 2009)
“Causing pain or harm to a sentient other requires justification.”

NOT universal:
“Causing pain or harm to another requires justification.”

NOT universal:

Alternatives could include:

- “Causing pain or harm to another human requires justification.” Speciesism
“Causing pain or harm to another requires justification.”

NOT universal:
Alternatives could include:

- “Causing pain or harm to a heterosexual male of my ethnic group & religion requires justification.” Chauvinism
“Causing pain or harm to another requires justification.”

NOT universal:
Alternatives could include:

- “Causing pain or harm to anyone or thing capable of retaliation requires justification.” Contractarianism.
The second task

Understand special role of **veterinarians** (professionals) in animal welfare decisions:

- Certified expertise
- Obligation to gather, assess and provide knowledge
- Bully pulpit
- Professional power & authority
3 cases

- Mouse cage floors
- Guinea pig cage size
- Lab animals with heart attacks
Facts → Prescription: a case

Written by insiders (mostly vets)

“Guidelines” are almost-law

Based on:
“Committee of experts…recent research…extensive references”

Guide 1996
Facts → Prescription: a case

“... some evidence suggests that solid-bottom caging, with bedding, is preferred by rodents (Fullerton and Gilliatt 1967; Grover-Johnson and Spencer 1981; Ortman and others 1983).

Solid-bottom caging, with bedding, is therefore recommended for rodents.”

• Guide 1996
Fact $\rightarrow$ Prescription

Rodents prefer solid floors $\rightarrow$ must house rodents on solid floors
No wire grid floors for rodents

- What are the considered values?

- What are the facts? How good are the empirical data?
No wire grid floors for rodents

• What are the considered **values**? That animal preferences should rule? ANY preference?

• What are the **facts**? How good are the empirical data?
No wire grid floors for rodents

• What are the considered **values**?
  That animal preferences should rule?
  ANY preference?

• What are the **facts**? How good are the empirical data?

  The 3 citations on “rodent preference” are reports on foot neuropathy. In rodents
Case 2 – G Pig space requirements
Match the fact to the prescription

Fact:

Guinea pigs spend 70% of time at periphery of cage

Prescription:

1. GPigs may be housed with less space
2. Gpig cages must maximize wall-space
Match the fact to the prescription

Fact:
Guinea pigs spend 70% of time at periphery of cage

Prescription:
1. GPigs may be housed with less space
   AWAAct 1991

2. Gpig cages must maximize wall-space
   Guide 1996
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fact</th>
<th>Prescription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inflammation has a role in cardiac ischemia-reperfusion events</td>
<td>• Post-op inflammation must be managed in ischemia-reperfusion studies&lt;br&gt;• Anti-inflammatory drugs must not be used in ischemia-reperfusion studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expert Knowledge

- Asymmetrical
- Necessary but not sufficient for prescription
- Verifiable
- Disinterested
- Political
- (Provisionally) empowering
Expert Knowledge

- Asymmetrical
- Necessary but not sufficient for prescription
- Verifiable
- Disinterested
- Political

- Partial
- Probabilistic
- Multi-dimensional
A case for vet students:

Euthanasia of an ill animal.
A case for vet students:

Euthanasia of an ill animal.

Client wants to euthanize animal that vet would treat. Vet wants to euthanize animal that client would treat.
• Tasks for student:

• Analyze the case:
  – Identify stakeholders [Lord, 2009]
  – Clarify issues & resources
  – Awareness of relevant laws & policies
• Understand their role as vets
  – Explore the medical options (be aware the “techno-fix”)
  – Understand power dynamics (vet as \( \alpha, \omega \), or somewhere in between)
  – Limits of expertise
Match the fact to the prescription

- Condition has a 10% chance of >6 mo survival
- Condition has 90% chance of >6 mo survival
- Patient is in Grade 4 of 5 pain 2 hours/day
- Patient is in Grade 1 or 5 pain 20 hours/day
- Euthanize
- Euthanize
- Euthanize
- Don’t euthanize
- Don’t euthanize
- Don’t euthanize
Client knowledge v Vet knowledge

- Relationship to Probability & Chance
- Relationship to uncertainty
- Client concerns about handling needles
- Beliefs about the finality of death
- Death as vet’s medical failure
To conclude:

• Welfare decisions are a complicated blend of fact knowledge and values.
• Advocacy & expertise have a complicated relationship
• Knowledge is a complicated business
• Vets occupy a unique role as fact-experts on animal health
• Vet students’ development should include understanding the power, responsibilities and limits of their expert knowledge
Thanks to my muses

- For the inspiration and the intellectual input:
  David Takacs        Bernie Rollin
  Joy Mench           Alicia Z Karas
  Joe Garner
Students *should* be able to articulate what’s wrong with fact-free opinion as the basis of prescription.
Case #1: Multiple major survival surgery

- (x) No animal will be used in more than one major operative procedure from which it is allowed to recover, unless: …
- (C) In other special circumstances as determined by the [USDA]

- Animal Welfare Act Regulations: § 2.31
No multiple surgeries on animals

• What are the considered values on which this is based? Fairness?

• What are facts that support or undermine this norm?
  e.g., Are second surgeries always more/less/equally painful compared to first surgeries?
• Are second surgeries always more/less/equally painful compared to first surgeries?
Students *should* be able to articulate what’s wrong with [value-free?] fact as the basis of prescription.
working definitions:

• Advocacy  -- promoting a course of action

• Advocacy and Expertise exist in a delicate balance  Mench 2009
Vet knowledge v other experts’ knowledge

- Applied behavior
- General v specialized knowledge