

MINUTES
University of Minnesota Medical School
Faculty Advisory Council

February 3, 2009

The meeting of the Medical School Faculty Advisory Council (FAC) was held on Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at 4:00 p.m. in Room B646 Mayo Memorial Building and 146 School of Medicine Duluth (via ITV). Esam El-Fakahany, past Chair of the FAC presided.

Members Present: Drs. Aviva Abosch, Robert Acton, Sharon Allen, Bob Bache, Vivan Bardwell, Catherine Bendel, Bradley Benson, Susan Berry, Peter Bitterman, Paul Bohjanen, Jim Boulger, Joseph Brocato, Linda Burns, James Carey, Levi Downs, Esam El-Fakahany, Sean Elliott, Kalpna Gupta, Gwen Halaas, Karla Hemesath, Kristin Hogquist, Stephen Katz, Teresa Nick, James Nixon, James Pacala, Christopher Pennell, Teresa Rose-Hellekant, David Rothenberger, Yoji Shimizu, Brian Sick, Julie Switzer, Gregory Vercellotti, and Jo-Anne Young.

Dean's Office Staff Present: Dean Deborah Powell, Dr. Roberta Sonnino, Ms. Allison Campbell Jensen, and Ms. Patricia Mulcahy.

Welcome

Dr. El-Fakahany called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Introductory Remarks

Dr. Peter Bitterman, member of the FAC, welcomed the Chair and Vice Chair of the IACUC, Drs. George Wilcox and Carolyn Fairbanks, and explained the need for a dialogue with the Medical School faculty. It is not uncommon for faculty to go through two or three rounds of revisions, even with extensive experience with IACUC applications. He asked how we develop tools to facilitate the process of responsible conduct of research with animals and how can we work effectively with the IACUC.

IACUC/Faculty Relations

Drs. George Wilcox and Carolyn Fairbanks presented on behalf of the IACUC. Both were elected to their respective offices in August 2008. They explained that the IACUC is currently on probation, and the governing body (AAALAC) will revisit this summer to hopefully eliminate the probationary status. The IACUC used to run out of the same office as the IRB, but now runs out of the Office of the Vice President for Research.

IACUC has recently hired a Ph.D. scientist to act as a faculty liaison, who will work with investigators with the hope of increasing the number of approvals of first applications. This liaison is also trying to advise faculty on how to write protocols and how to improve communication between faculty and the IACUC. The IACUC is also attempting to increase the number of AHC faculty who are on the IACUC Committee. This number has decreased over time, and without qualified faculty to serve on this committee, the integrity of the review is compromised.

Dr. Wilcox then asked for participation from the FAC, as investigators, to participate in this process, by serving on this committee and making their labs more compliant. There are Town Hall meetings being scheduled by the Office of the Vice President for Research, to help increase the dialogue between the faculty and IACUC. Additionally, Information Sessions have been piloted to summarize the changes that have taken place and where the IACUC needs faculty participation.

Members of the FAC asked if there was a possibility for compensation for the time that faculty would spend on the review committees for the IACUC. Dr. Fairbanks explained that there is no mechanism right now to compensate faculty, and that service would count as citizenship to the University. They are trying to put compensation into place, but it is not confirmed. The members also asked what previous compliance issues were cited that caused the current probationary status. Dr. Fairbanks explained that they were cited for the expertise level of the committee members, among other issues.

Dr. Wilcox explained that they are developing electronic templates to use online, which will assist in application preparation. Many other schools have successfully implemented template use, and it should be in place at the University of Minnesota in about 18 months. He also explained that investments are being made in the IACUC, and they will pay off, but it will just take time. The FAC agreed that making templates available would help.

The FAC also asked why there doesn't seem to be consistency in the IACUC reviews. Identical protocols can be turned in and receive different results. Dr. Fairbanks believes that greater expertise on the IACUC Committee will help to alleviate this issue. The FAC then inquired why you can't turn in the same application for the same protocol for a renewal. Many times the IACUC will require changes that alter the outcomes of the research being done. How come the renewal can't be exactly the same? Drs. Fairbanks and Wilcox both mentioned that they have been advised by legal counsel that you are not allowed to turn in the same protocol for reapplication.

Drs. Fairbanks and Wilcox also mentioned that AAALAC cited the IACUC for lack of intensity in review. The FAC then asked how AAALAC assesses "intensity", and pointed out that there is a difference between intensity and stringency. The FAC again stressed the value of having templates available to assist with the application process, and hoped that the issue of renewal could also be examined. The FAC also asked for continued improvements in communication and reasonable timelines for IACUC requests.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeni Skar
Staff to the FAC