

CDC Improves Animal Care and Use Program
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[Male Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Female Announcer] In December of 2005, the Association for the Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care—International, AAALAC, reported serious concerns about CDC’s animal care and use program during a site visit in Atlanta. Since then, CDC completely restructured its animal care and use program to “commendable” status according to AAALAC. Doctor Tanja Popovic, Acting Chief Science Officer of the CDC responds.

[Dr. Tanja Popovic] Allow me to say that we understand that those who have heard about what went wrong in our program are troubled and we are troubled too, because it is our ethical and moral responsibility to take care of the animals that are entrusted to us in the best and humane way possible. When we got the AAALAC report we were very concerned and we fixed things. What we tried to do in the meantime is actually patch things while the animal care and use program needed a major overhaul, and because of the fragmented system and many ways in which oversight was carried, things just didn’t get done in the way they should have. But that has changed now and I am very confident today, as CDC’s institutional official for animal care and use, to let you know that we now have the program that we can be very proud of and that many others will want to emulate.

[Female Announcer] Tell us what has CDC done to fix the problem?

[Dr. Tanja Popovic] We have done three critically important things. For those people who have been trying to preserve and worked *really* hard on protecting the animal care and use program at CDC, we finally provided resources and help that was needed. Second, we have elevated the oversight and the authority for animal care and use to the level of the CDC Director. We have also expanded an independent outside monitoring system. And most importantly, we have addressed every single deficiency and concern that AAALAC has forwarded to us, and then we actually went further to improve the system even more. So we are very critically aware of the importance of setting things right and we definitely want to make sure that we restore our good record.

[Female Announcer] What guarantee does the public have that this will not happen again?

[Dr. Tanja Popovic] The public can be assured that this will not happen again because the changes we made are permanent. We have made permanent changes in our facilities, we have hired permanent staff to provide additional assistance, we have made permanent legal changes by elevating the animal care and use program to the level of the Office of the Director and now it has

equal standing with that of the research on human subjects. I do want to say that over the past few months, as I have been working with many colleagues throughout CDC on this effort and visited all CDC facilities where animal work is conducted, that I have been absolutely humbled by the way that people who take care of animals look at what they do, that's definitely not a job-- this is their career choice because of the love for the animals that they have. And it is a wonderful experience in a way, and I must say that I am proud of the efforts that we have made and the progress that we have made and very determined to keep this level of success that we have now accomplished and keep the state of the art animal care and use program that we now have.

[Female Announcer] Why does CDC do research with animals?

[Dr. Tanja Popovic] We do research with animals only because some research, that is important for improving peoples' health and saving peoples' life, cannot be done in any other way. And, CDC researchers (principle investigators and all of those whose research does involve animals) must submit a very detailed protocol that is then reviewed carefully to meet the highest standards of research relevance.

[Female Announcer] How did you feel personally when you read the 2005 AAALAC report?

[Dr. Tanja Popovic] I knew immediately that we would have to take full responsibility for the deficiencies that were appointed to us and I was really very humbled by the whole experience. But at the same time, I was determined more than ever to treasure animal care and use program and to take best care of the people who take care of our animals because this is the right thing to do--not because it is the thing we have to do.

[Female Announcer] How is CDC's relationship with AAALAC now?

[Dr. Tanja Popovic] CDC's relationship with AAALAC has always been and continues to be based on a mutual goal and a strong mutual respect, and I have nothing but respect and utmost gratitude for AAALAC for their continued support and guidance, especially in the past year, that allowed us to make this program the world-class program for animal care and use. I also was very impressed and thankful for their willingness and openness to discuss with us several areas in their report that in the end turned out to be a simple miscommunication. And I must say that I was extremely pleased with the exit briefing after the visit last month because it was very clear that they were very impressed with the progress we made and very generous in their commending us for how far we have gone.

[Female Announcer] Is there anything else you wish to add?

[Dr. Tanja Popovic] I would like to add that as many people at CDC, I myself, am very proud of the work that we have done and I am determined, with all of my colleagues, to keep and sustain the state of the art program for animal care and use that we now have.

[Male Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family, and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.