How to Reduce Cumulative Suffering During the Whole Study Cycle?

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Charles River, Kuopio, Finland, conducts preclinical studies using rodent models of neurological disorders. According to the retrospective assessments, approximately 10% of all animals used at the site belong to the severe category. It is crucial that all available tools are utilized to reduce cumulative suffering throughout the entire study cycle. The site should have institutional policies that describe the key components of the animal welfare program, supporting the work of veterinary and scientific staff. The internal review of study proposals, protocols, and animal licenses increases staff awareness about the research conducted at the site and provides the initial opportunity to influence study components and the 3Rs. The site's Animal Welfare Body (AWB) should actively work towards implementing new 3R methods. It is essential to conduct pilot studies to provide feasibility data and evaluate the cost impact of refinements to convince management. Improved welfare does not necessarily lead to increased costs; in fact, it can sometimes reduce them. Staff should receive training to actively use systematic tools for welfare assessment. Utilization of up-to-date, study-specific humane intervention point and humane endpoint information should be made as easily accessible as possible. Online reporting solutions should be employed for retrospective assessment and monitoring of daily tasks in the lab to enhance commitment, transparency, and timeliness of activities. An active site AWB forms the core of animal welfare work. With the support of the corporate animal welfare network, local management, and all staff working on the site, the AWB can best achieve its goals of improving animal welfare.