

Jerald Silverman, DVM, Column Coordinator

Alternate IACUC Members: What Are the Rules?

Once again summer vacations and professional meetings took their toll on the number of members present for a Great Eastern University IACUC meeting. However, unlike past years, the Committee believed it was now prepared to deal with the situation. As soon as Helen Trotta, the IACUC secretary, discovered that two of the three scientists on the IACUC would not be present at the upcoming meeting, she called Dr. Tommy Hendricks. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) had appointed Hendricks, also a scientist, as the alternate for any of the scientific members of the Committee. He was available for the meeting, and all went smoothly.

The evening after the meeting, Trotta casually mentioned the day's events to her husband, George. To her surprise, George, an IACUC administrator at another university, questioned the legitimacy of what had transpired. He was of the opinion that an alternate member could only serve on behalf of one specifically named regular IACUC member, and also had to have the same designation as the regular member. He said that Hendricks, as a scientist, could only serve as an alternate for one specifically named scientist. "I don't think so," said Helen. "As far as I know, a person can be appointed as an alternate for one, two, three, or any other number of people, as long as that alternate has the same designation as the absent member. We named Hendricks, who's a scientist, as an alternate for any scientist on the committee. He didn't vote twice, George, he only voted once, so as far as I'm concerned, there's no problem." "Well, there's no problem until you get caught" said her husband. "If I were you I'd think twice about this."

What is the correct answer to the disagreement between Helen and George Trotta?

Call the Florist, George

David Burbank, PhD

George, George, George, "until you get caught ... think twice." Call the florist, George. Then, practice saying, "Helen, I'm sorry; you're right."

OLAW, with USDA's concurrence, issued guidance regarding alternate IACUC members¹. The provisions listed therein include the following:

"There must be a specific one-to-one designation of IACUC members and alternates. This is necessary to ensure that a committee is properly constituted, even when alternates are serving. For example, an alternate for a non-affiliated IACUC member would need to also meet the non-affiliated member requirements. Use of a pool of alternates would not be consistent with this requirement."

This provision neither prevents an individual from being appointed as an alternate for more than one regular member, nor does it preclude a regular member from having more than one alternate. Each alternate member must have adequate training and must meet the applicable membership requirements for the regular member(s) for whom he or she is appointed as an alternate. Obviously, it can get confusing. This is another reason there must be a specific one-to-one designation of regular IACUC members and alternate members (*i.e.*, for each regular member–alternate member relationship or appointment).

For example, let us give the two absent scientists in this scenario names, Smith and Jones. Both serve on the Committee in the scientist capacity or role. If Hendricks is a practicing scientist and is experienced in research involving animals, then the CEO

can appoint him as an alternate member for Smith and as an alternate member for Jones. These are two separate specific one-to-one designations. Hendricks can, however, only actively serve in the alternate capacity for one member at a time.

The meeting minutes should reflect that Hendricks was present at the meeting and was actively serving, in an alternate capacity, for Smith *or* for Jones—but not both. Because Hendricks voted only once (I assume this to mean that he had only one vote—either as Smith's alternate *or* as Jones' alternate), it would seem that there is "no problem," George.

In George's defense, he was of the opinion that an alternate member can only serve on behalf of one specifically named regular IACUC member. At a single point in time, this is true. At any given time, an alternate can only actively serve as an alternate for a single member. However, as described earlier, it is permissible for an individual to be appointed as an alternate for more than one regular member.

Reference

1. National Institutes of Health. Office of Extramural Research guidance regarding administrative IACUC issues and efforts to reduce regulatory burden. NOTICE: NOT-OD-01-017 (12 February 2001).

Burbank is an Investigator at Great Eastern University.

By George, He's Got It!

Joseph D. Thulin, DVM, MS, DACLAM

Helen should listen to George. The use of alternate IACUC members can be a very effective way to spread the Committee's workload and to have a contingency for