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## Getting feet wet in a dry lab

Practicing a new surgical technique on live animals can be stressful to trainees, and even more so to animals. Computerized training modules have certain limitations, as they do not allow interaction between instructors and trainees. Stevens and Dey developed a hands-on training program for rodent surgery using handmade, cost-effective simulation models. The program allows trainees to repeatedly practice basic surgical techniques and pre- and postoperative procedures without compromising live animals.

## Semiannual review, revamped

It is common practice for research institutions to review their animal care and use programs at least once every six months, to make sure that they comply with animal welfare regulations. Existing standard review procedures are often too generalized to stimulate a thorough and effective discussion. McEntee and Sandgren present a worksheet that they developed and used at their institution in several consecutive program reviews, which may help review committees achieve the full potential of the evaluation process.

## Pinworm phylogeny and detection

Pinworm infestation is relatively prevalent in lab rodents and rabbits, often confounding experimental results. Because pinworms have no fossil records from which to determine common ancestry, genomic sequencing is instrumental to understanding the relationships between the different species. Using high-fidelity polymerase chain reaction, Feldman and Bowman determined unique DNA sequences for four pinworm species commonly found in lab rodents and rabbits and carried out phylogenetic analysis. They used this information to develop molecular tests for pinworm detection and compared the new diagnostic technique with perianal tape testing, fecal flotation and direct examination of intestinal content.

## Freundian analysis

Though Freund's complete adjuvant can cause severe inflammatory effects, many researchers continue to use it to boost animals' immune responses to vaccines. In an effort to identify an alternative immunological adjuvant, Powers *et al.* gave New Zealand white rabbits a vaccine mixed either with Freund's complete adjuvant or with one of two formulations of AdjuVac, an adjuvant previously developed in their group. All three formulations positively affected rabbits' immune response but caused inflammation. The adverse effects of AdjuVac, however, may be less severe than those of Freund's complete adjuvant.