

The work streams of Understanding Animal Research

UAR works across a number of areas to explain animal research, correct myths and promote science. Our objectives are to hold a conversation with the public about why and how animals are used in scientific research, and to maintain a supportive operating environment for biomedical research in the UK

Engagement

During 2014, UAR published the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK. This sets out four commitments - practical and measurable ways in which organisations that use or fund the use of animals in medical, veterinary and scientific research can be more open and transparent about their work. We have offered support and training to the Concordat's 93 signatories, visiting many to discuss how they can fulfil their commitments.

2014 also saw UAR organise a series of talks at UK veterinary schools, in conjunction with the Laboratory Animal Veterinary Association.

Education

UAR provides training for scientists and animal technologists and arranges for them to visit secondary schools across the UK to explain their work and the role of animal research and to answer questions and challenges from young people. It also conducts its own school talks, and visits science fairs, using a rubber rat, lab coats, syringes and goggles in interactive sessions that allow students to conduct an animal 'procedure' of their own. 2014 saw the expansion of our Open Labs project, with groups of young people from 25 schools visiting 11 animal facilities.

Policy

UAR works proactively with government to form strong policy, with political parties to propose sensible policy and with individual MPs to educate about animal research. This involves high-level meetings with civil servants, personal briefings and laboratory visits for politicians, and feeding into political policy formation processes. In 2014, much of our work focused on the forthcoming General Election, working behind the scenes on

manifesto development and providing information for prospective parliamentary candidates.



International collaboration

In 2014, UAR set up the [European Animal Research Association](#) as a separate, stand-alone organisation. UAR's work was also presented at the 2014 Society for Neuroscience meeting in Washington.

Media

UAR engages both proactively and reactively with the media. Since the publication of the Concordat, we have seen an increase in the number of organisations proactively communicating about their research using animals. UAR also works to counteract negative messages, correct myths and properly explain context. We set up lab visits for journalists and help them to produce feature pieces, including acting as the scientific adviser for in-depth articles. Activist letters to local and national newspapers are countered as are activist comments online.

Online

UAR has a strong online presence with over 2750 Twitter followers, many tens of thousands of "likes" for our Facebook page and over 1,000,000 website visitors per year. We use social media sites such as Reddit and Google+ to drive traffic to our

sites. UAR also publishes opinion pieces in outlets such as the Huffington Post. As well as our main website, UAR runs animalresearch.info, a resource for researchers to understand the historical and current role of animals in research and animalrightsextremism.info, which maps animal-related extremist activity across Europe and the world. UAR has also set up the Science Action Network to enable scientists and animal care staff to counter misinformation about animal research online.

Member support

We provide a consultancy service and direct support for our members connected with the wide range of issues that we work on. Much of this work is confidential, concerning specific problems when members are targeted by animal rights groups or when they need to address public views on animal research. UAR also provides training on a range of communications and engagement activities, both for our members and for Concordat signatories.

Engagement

Concordat on Openness

The Concordat currently has now been signed by 93 UK organisations and we are still welcoming new signatories.

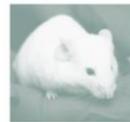
There have been many examples of great openness work in the year since the Concordat was published and we are currently compiling the first Annual Progress Report. This will be reviewed by the Concordat Steering Group in July and UAR will publish the Report by the end of summer 2015.

December 2014 saw the inaugural UAR Openness Awards, which recognised Huntingdon Life Sciences, the Medical Research Council and Professor Sir Colin Blakemore for being open about animal research long before others in our sector were prepared to do so. The bravery of our award recipients paved the way for the Concordat. We also revived the Paget Lecture and Professor Dame

Linda Partridge gave a fascinating account of her research into ageing. Nominations for the 2015 Openness Awards will open soon and the Paget Lecture and Awards ceremony will be on December 7.

Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK

14 MAY 2014



Veterinary Schools Roadshow

Beginning in March 2014, we ran a series of talks at UK vet schools. Developed jointly with LAVA, these talks aimed to give veterinary students an understanding of animal research as it pertains to both veterinary and human medicine. The sessions also explored the career paths for vets in laboratory animal science, either as researchers or as named veterinary students.

We are grateful to the Biomedical Research Education Trust and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council for providing project funding for this roadshow.

Education

School talks

As usual, school talks have been at the centre of the Education team's activities over the past year. We have a target of 300 talks to be run in UK schools in the academic year 2014-15 and are on track to meet that target.

Out of school

After a successful audition for the South East region of the Women's Institute, UAR became an officially approved speaker and have presented animal research to six WI branches with, we hope, more to follow once the list of speakers is finally published. Our rubber rat demo was present at the Big Bang Fair in Birmingham and a further series of Big Bang events in London schools. We presented to a summer school at UCL and have a summer school at ICL in the pipeline.

Open Labs

Eleven research facilities joined in with Open Labs this year running events during Science Week and beyond and some 25 schools had the chance to show their students the realities of animal research. We will aim for 20 participating facilities in 2016.



Policy and media

Media

UAR's relationship with the media continued to evolve in 2014/15, with stories generated through a combination of Concordat signatories placing stories, UAR initiatives and being recognised as the go-to people for both analysis and comment. As such, we have been in a position to place, suppress or heavily modify dozens of stories in 2014/15.

There were numerous external events to piggyback on in 2014/15, including the end of SHAC, the jailing of an extremist and the reform of Section 24, which was carried by Science, Nature,

Research Fortnight and Times Higher Education. The illegality of cosmetics testing became the focus for articles in both the Mail and Times, and we commented extensively on a national campaign by National Organisation Anti-Vivisection to bribe students to provide details and photos of fellow students involved in animal research.

We assisted Radio 4 and The Times with lab visits. We also provided 'talking heads' for around 20 radio and television interviews. UAR continues to respond to letters in local papers, although these have become less frequent as activists have realised it is an opportunity for us to set the record straight in response.

UAR complained to the Advertising Standards Authority over a NAVS advert and all complaints were upheld. In all, the ad was found to breach ASA rules 3.1 (Misleading advertising) three times, 3.7 (substantiation) three times, 3.9 (qualification) and 3.13 (exaggeration).

Public Affairs

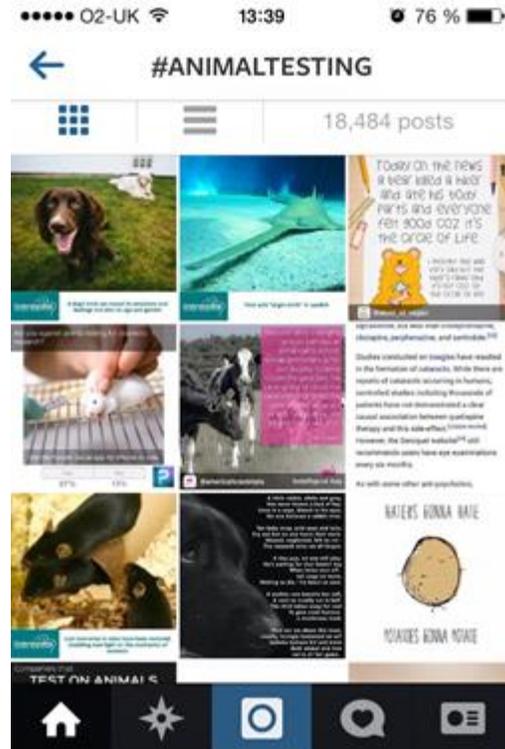
The policy year was clearly dominated by the election, in the run-up to which UAR created a website for Prospective Parliamentary Candidates, building a database of candidates, then contacting all 2,500+ of them.

Work continues to develop relationships with new MPs, all of whom have been emailed, ahead of a wider engagement programme which will start following the Summer Recess.

PPCs who signed anti-research electoral pledges have additionally been contacted to point out the implications of their promises. It suffices to say that most were unaware of what their pledge would have meant.

In addition to the election, UAR attended all three of the major Party conferences, manning an exhibition stall, attending fringe events and forging links with helpful factions within parties.

A Parliamentary motion, EDM 263, called for a debate between activists and scientists on the merits of using animals, which UAR accepted. UAR also wrote to MPs signing EDM 263 to explain that it was spurious, that we had accepted the debate, and that activists then attempted to limit its terms to exclude all research bar pharmaceutical testing.

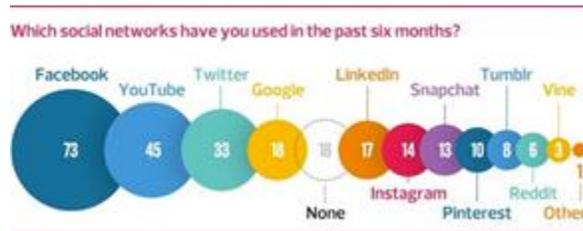


Online communication

Social media trends

People increasingly use their mobile devices to browse the web, not least to read news and social media updates.

The diagram below from a social trends survey this year led us to add one more network to our list of channels - Instagram.



When we started posting on Instagram, searching with the phrase 'animal testing' brought up unpleasant images advertising animal rights groups. Now our images have largely replaced these.

Meanwhile, we have continued to post content to our other channels and now post to Facebook during the evening and over the weekend. These posts outside the 9-5 period have helped increase our impact or reach on Facebook by around 20% compared to last year.

Making all of our websites mobile and tablet friendly has helped maintain our online profile in this issue.

We again received over one million hits on our websites and our videos were watched 200,000 times. This doubling from the 100,000 views we received last year is down to new content and new channels, now including Vimeo and iTunes as well as YouTube and Labtube.

We have also been helped by Facebook competing with YouTube. New videos on Facebook are currently receiving an additional 'push' across Facebook.

We have also been helped by new video content being produced by our members as part of the Concordat process.



IAT produced a new careers video and both Imperial College and Cambridge University made videos describing some of their research work using animals.

We look forward to continuing to highlight these examples of openness through our social media channels and our 'video of the week' slot.



The statistics

In the last year we have increase the number of our Twitter followers to over 2750, now have almost 6,900 Facebook friends and have had over 7,000,000 views on Google+. Our videos have been seen by around 200,000 people on our sites and more elsewhere as our videos are frequently embedded on other websites. And we have maintained our Klout score – a measure of online impact – at 78.

Member support

While much of our member support is confidential consultancy work, Freedom of Information requests and presentations to member organisations continue to be core activities for UAR.

We provided media relations support to B&K during its 2014 planning appeal, participating in many TV and radio interviews on the company's behalf. We have also supported many of our University members in dealing with FOI requests about their animal research, helping them to co-ordinate responses and consider a sector-wide view in drafting their responses.

International collaboration

In March 2014, UAR formally incorporated the European Animal Research Association as a separate organisation at Companies House. EARA aims to foster better public understanding of animal research and build resilience into the supply chain across Europe.

UAR also worked with the Wellcome Trust, EARA and many other UK and European science organisations to counter the 'Stop Vivisection' European Citizens Initiative. Despite managing to collect the required number of signatures in a number of EU member states, the organisers were not able to persuade MEPs or the European Commission that the current EU Directive on animal research should be abolished.

We will continue to work with our partner organisations to promote strong animal welfare and science in the run-up to the review of the Directive in 2017.