

PCRM Update

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine P.O. Box 6322, Washington, D.C. 20015

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1986

THE STUDENT'S RIGHT TO "DO NO HARM" AMSA Takes a Stand

The American Medical Student Association has responded to the concerns of its members about the use of animals in medical education. The AMSA House of Delegates this year adopted the new *Principles Regarding Vivisection in Medical Educa-*

tion. . .and vivisection in medical education, which is the demonstration of already well-known facts and techniques." The resolution urges that all such labs be optional for students who object.

Susanna Walsh, one of the resolution's

have the support of AMSA's *Principles*. In addition, the resolution tacitly confirms what many observers have suggested: that animal labs in medical education are objectionable to many students, and that they are not essential to medical education.

PCRM AND STUDENTS' RIGHTS

PCRM has supported many medical students who, individually and collectively, have chosen not to use animals in their coursework. Now our support for medical students goes a step further. We will contact *all* U.S. medical students, supporting their right to make their own decisions in this regard.

In cooperation with the American Medical Student Association, PCRM will provide an informational brochure to all medical students, detailing the support of ASMA and PCRM for those who choose not to participate in animal labs.

The resolution "condemns the practice of faculty intimidation of medical students to force them to attend classes and labs using live animals."

tion. This resolution supports giving students complete information about procurement and treatment of the lab animals before the lab begins "so that medical students can make their own informed ethical decisions." The resolution "condemns the practice of faculty intimidation of medical students to force them to attend classes and labs using live animals."

It further calls for alternatives to the use of non-human animals in the classroom, and urges that a directory of alternative educational materials such as films, videotapes and computer simulation be produced. It also "condemns laxity in the administration of anesthesia and analgesia" during and after surgery, and calls for humane care and treatment of animals before and after procedures.

The resolution was amended during debate to affirm the justification for the use of animals in medicine "if such use will save or benefit human lives," but then differentiates between "vivisection in medical re-

sponsors, explains her position: "We were told that the dog lab was necessary to give us the feel of living tissue. But it occurred at the beginning of our second year, when we knew nothing at all about the principles of surgery. . .The people running the dog lab

The ASMA resolution encourages medical schools to let students "make their own informed ethical decisions."

were not MD's. They had no idea about the training we needed or what we would be getting in the operating room. In the operating room, we assisted at human heart transplants. The dog lab was totally irrelevant."

Students who are intimidated when they refuse to participate in animal labs now

Students who are pressured into participating should contact their AMSA representatives, says AMSA President Jeffrey Stolz. If necessary, they can contact the AMSA national office, which will contact the department in question. AMSA's address is: 1890 Preston White Drive, Reston, VA 22091, 703-620-6600. All concerned students should also be in touch with PCRM at P.O. Box 6322, Washington, DC 20015.

UPDATE ON MT. SINAI PROTEST

In a previous newsletter, we reported on a protest by medical students at Mt. Sinai. They objected to a required lab in physiology using live dogs. One of the students involved in the protest told us of its outcome.

Ultimately, about 80 of 115 students boycotted the dog lab. Of those who did participate, about half subsequently said they found the lab worthless. Initially 22 dogs were to be used; only 12 finally were used. There were no repercussions, retaliations, or punishments for the boycotting students; their grades were not affected by their decision to not attend the lab. There is no indication that Mt. Sinai intends to change its future policy on the lab, however; attendance is still "mandatory."