Policy on the recertification of training and the monitoring of proficiency of animal handling and procedures

It is imperative to ensure that animal users perform techniques well and are aware of any changes in animal care procedures and issues on a continuing basis. In this regard, the Canadian Council on Animal Care guidelines state that “Following initial participation in an institutional training program, it is recommended that all personnel attend a refresher course after five years, and that additional modules be attended by individuals as their activities or responsibilities change”. The present policy describes the mechanisms by which training is recertified after initial training.

1. Theory training:

Recertification occurs every 5 years and consists of reading the latest version of the appropriate theory training course and passing the appropriate test(s).

2. Practical training:

The CCAC does not require recertification after practical training, but rather seeks assurance that users handle animals in appropriate ways at all times. Thus, doing a practical proficiency evaluation or a new workshop after 5 years is either of limited value, if the user performs well, or too late, if there were deficiencies. The following four-point mentoring process assures that users are provided help in acquiring and maintaining animal care and handling skills.

   2.1 Follow-up after workshops: The follow-up on animal users’ proficiency for handling techniques is achieved through the Quality Assistance Program. As part of their role, the Quality Assistants meet researchers and animal users, to discuss and observe procedures. Following this, they make recommendations, when appropriate, about possible deficiencies and ways to seek improvement. To ensure coordination with the Training program, the Quality Assistants feed back on these matters to the animal facility supervisor and/or to the Chair of the Facility Animal Care Committee and/or to the McGill Training Coordinator. This follow-up does not replace workshop follow-up by workshop instructors for individuals who do not perform techniques adequately in the workshop.

   2.2 Mentoring: Animal health technicians (AHTs) check procedures and, in case of sub-optimal or unsuitable animal handling and procedures, help animal users achieve suitable skills. This policy also applies to work with animals performed outside animal facilities. In the latter case, the AHTs will make appointments with lab members and go to the laboratory to monitor the procedures.

Notes:
- Cases of deficiencies in animal care and use, and actions taken to correct the problem, are to be documented by the animal facility staff and reported
to the Chair of the Facility Animal Care Committee and/or to the McGill Training Coordinator.

- This monitoring is distinct from, but complementary to, the Quality Assistance Program, in that it occurs on a day-to-day basis, through the interaction of animal care staff and lab members.

2.3 Advertisement of AHT's role in day-to-day training: The availability of AHTs for advice and ad hoc teaching of procedures will be advertised by signs or memos in facilities.

2.4 Biomethodology videos: Videos for every procedure taught in animal use workshops will soon become accessible online to animal users.

To ensure continued improvement of available training, AHTs and Quality Assistants will provide feedback to the UACC Training and Qualifications Subcommittee and to workshop instructors via the animal facility supervisor and the Training coordinator.

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