

A Researcher's Guide to the Animal Care and Use Occupational Health Program

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What is the Animal Care and Use Occupational Health (ACUOHP) program?

A questionnaire-based medical surveillance program for participants conducting research and educational activities with non-human vertebrate animals. The program uses the services of the Santa Cruz Occupational Medical Center to assist participants in recognizing, evaluating, and controlling exposures to animals and addressing any personal health issues that may be affected by their research.

Why are we starting the Animal Care and Use Occupational Health (ACUOHP) program?

Laboratory and wild animals can present unique occupational hazards, including bites/scratches, allergies, and disease transmission (zoonoses). In some cases, the consequences of exposure to these hazards can be exacerbated by pre-existing medical conditions. This program provides an opportunity for each individual working with animals to have an animal-oriented occupational health review and medical follow-up, if needed.

When does this program become effective?

The program became effective in January 2009 with targeted participation. Full program implementation will be initiated in July 2009.

Who does this program include?

All UCSC faculty, staff, students, visiting researchers, or other personnel listed on IACUC protocols and working directly with non-human vertebrate animals for research and educational purposes. This includes personnel working on the UCSC campus, at the Long Marine Laboratory, or at field research stations or locations.

Are individuals submitting “Observation Only” IACUC protocols required to enroll in the full ACUOHP?

Individuals submitting “Observation Only” IACUC protocols are required to submit Form A (Animal Contact Risk Assessment Questionnaire). If there is no significant risk of exposure to potential animal-related health hazards, no further ACUOHP forms will be required. Strict “Observation Only” protocols, such as bird watching, marine mammal observation, etc, will typically only require completion of Form A as indicated above.

If the “Observation Only” protocol involves opportunistic collection of fur, excrement, or other biological materials that could present an exposure concern, the full medical surveillance program (including completion of Forms A, B, and C) will be required.

How does the ACUOHP impact teaching programs/laboratories?

A risk assessment will be conducted for each teaching-related IACUC protocol to determine the level of participation in the medical surveillance program.

Who will pay for this program?

EH&S will pay the medical evaluation costs associated with this program *through June 30, 2009*. After this date, the program will be reassessed to determine the most appropriate method of billing the program costs. During the time period that EH&S is responsible for the program costs, billing will be handled directly by EH&S.

How long will it take for me to receive clearance to work on an IACUC protocol?

The SCOMC typically requires 2- 4 weeks to review the medical surveillance information and provide clearance information to EH&S. If a follow-up telephone discussion or visit with the occupational physician is needed, then additional time may be required before work can begin. If you have questions or concerns about the length of time required to review your submitted medical surveillance information, contact biosafety@ucsc.edu or 459-2553.

How does this affect my IACUC protocol?

You will not be permitted to begin work until all personnel associated with an IACUC protocol have completed the medical review process (i.e., Form C Animal Contact Occupational Medical Surveillance has been received and approved by EH&S for each participant).

How long will it take for IACUC protocol approval?

If all medical surveillance forms are submitted to SCOMC expeditiously, IACUC protocol approval will be granted using the same designated member or full committee review process. The longer it takes to submit each participant’s medical forms, the longer it could take for final protocol approval.

How does this affect my IACUC amendment?

If your amendment adds personnel to the protocol, each person must complete the medical surveillance process.

If your amendment adds animal species to the protocol, you will need to update and submit a new Form A for each participant. This information will be provided to the SCOMC for review and amendment of Form C for each participant.

Who will notify the IACUC when the occupational physician has completed the medical review?

EH&S will notify the IACUC of the medical clearance status of the participants.

How often do I need to go through the medical review process?

Typically, you will be asked to resubmit the medical surveillance forms for review by the occupational physician every three (3) years. In some cases, you may be asked to resubmit the forms or revisit the occupational physician more often. Specific examples of this would include significant changes in your animal research focus (new species of animal, different level of contact, etc) or changes in your health status.

Do I have to complete the medical surveillance process as part of each IACUC protocol submission?

No. You can include information for all current and reasonably anticipated IACUC protocols at the same time. However, if you would like to work with a new species or if you have significant changes in your health status, you will need to resubmit the medical surveillance forms. Contact EH&S (biosafety@ucsc.edu) if you are unsure of whether or not to resubmit forms.

What do I do if I completed the medical review process for one PI and I am now included on a protocol for a different PI?

Complete Form A for the new protocol and send to EH&S. A risk assessment will be conducted to determine the need for any follow-up actions.

What do I do if I have a significant change in health status?

Significant changes in health status could include becoming pregnant or consideration of becoming pregnant, health conditions requiring immunosuppressive drugs (i.e., chemotherapy), or signs and symptoms of animal-related allergies. Contact the SCOMC directly to discuss your health status. EH&S can provide you with appropriate contact information, if needed.

Who will see my personal medical information and records?

The personal medical information on Form B is sent by each participant directly to the Santa Cruz Occupational Medical Center (SCOMC). Only the SCOMC staff will see the medical information. All medical records will be kept at SCOMC.

Who do I contact with questions?

Direct any questions regarding this program to biosafety@ucsc.edu. You may also call EH&S directly at 9-2553.