

Summary of Responses from the REACH Online Discussion Forum and e-Consultation Paper on “Human-Animal Combinations for Biomedical Research”

On 8 January 2008, the BAC released a public consultation paper on “Human-Animal Combinations for Biomedical Research”. The public was invited to provide views on:

- (a) the creation and use of human-animal combinations for research;
- (b) the prohibitions, limits and regulatory mechanisms that will be needed for such research in Singapore; and
- (c) any other matters related to human-animal combinations for biomedical research.

Fifty-eight entries were made on the REACH Discussion Forum by at least 43 individuals. Of the 43 individuals, 18 expressed some support for research using human-animal combinations, while 6 opposed such research. The comments of the remaining 19 did not show any clear views as to whether they supported or opposed the research.

Six entries were made on the REACH e-Consultation Paper. Of the 6 entries, 5 expressed opposition to the research.

These numbers are in themselves far from conclusive. The intention was not to conduct a survey but to discover if the discussions raised issues not covered in the consultation paper that needed to be addressed.

It transpired that the online debate was largely centred around the question of whether scientists can be trusted to regulate themselves. There also appears to be significant concern over effective supervision and control.

Possible implications of the research on relationship between human and non-human animal remain unsettling, especially among animal rights advocates and religious groups.

Human form clearly matters since a number of respondents expressed strong disapproval against the research where the form of a human ear was developed on the back of a mouse.