INTRODUCTION

Public attitudes toward the use of animals in research are affected by a variety of factors (Table 1). Public support for research is higher when pain and distress are minimized. However, little is known about public attitudes to research where pain is an integral or unavoidable component of the research.

METHODS

This study was a web-based forum where participants could vote on consent of humans versus animals in research. Participants were asked to vote ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘neutral’ for each scenario and to provide a reason why.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Three participant characteristics influenced the likelihood of voting ‘no’.

1. Gender, female
2. Vegetarianism
3. Increased severity of the human condition under study

The mean number of votes for ‘yes’ was higher when pain and distress were minimized compared to when pain was not.

DISCUSSION

The means of participant consent to further use of animals in pain research (Figure 3). Consistent with previous research that indicated greater support for medical research rather than cosmetic research, human beneficence was the most common reason given for voting ‘yes’ and opposition to animal research in general was the most common reason given for voting ‘no’.

The results of this study indicate that further use of animals in pain research among participants with non-predictive demographics. It may also be possible to predict support for further use of animals in pain research among participants. This information could be useful in designing studies aimed at obtaining what Logan and others have termed “public support” for animal experimentation.

CONCLUSION

The web-based platform proved useful for the study of attitudes toward animal use in pain research. Further studies of public attitudes could help to identify potential areas to engage the public about pain research and animal welfare.

REFERENCES


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors thank all the people at the University of British Columbia for their support and contribution to this study.