



Gulbenkian  
Institute for  
Molecular  
Medicine

## GIMM Statement on the Use of Animals in Research

Biomedical research, whether fundamental or applied, has significantly contributed to improving human and animal health and wellbeing. At GIMM, our research is driven by a commitment to excellence and societal impact, integrating diverse models, systems, and techniques. By bridging the gap between discovery and application through translational and clinical studies, we strive to pioneer innovative, data-driven solutions that enhance global health outcomes and promote equity. We prioritize the translation of scientific advancements into practical applications for disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, driving healthcare innovation and fostering meaningful improvements in patient care.

Since all living species share a common evolutionary origin, many biological characteristics are conserved across organisms. The use of model organisms, especially animals, has been crucial in advancing our understanding of human biology and the underlying mechanisms of disease. Many of today's medical treatments, including those for heart disease, cancer, polio, and neurological disorders, were developed based on discoveries made using animal models. Therefore, **GIMM supports the use of animal models when scientifically, ethically, and legally justified.**

We acknowledge that it is not yet possible to fully replace the use of animals in research. However, **GIMM is strongly committed to the principles of the 3Rs—Reduction, Refinement, and Replacement**—ensuring that the number of animals used is minimized, procedures are refined to improve animal welfare, and alternative non-animal methods are employed whenever feasible.

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Ensuring the welfare of animals, particularly vertebrates, is a priority. All research conducted at GIMM involving vertebrate animals complies with Portuguese (Decreto-Lei 113/2013) and European legislation (Directive 2010/63/EU) governing animal use in research. Research proposals involving animals undergo rigorous review by the GIMM Animal Welfare Body (ORBEA – Órgão Responsável pelo Bem-Estar Animal) and the National Authority (Direção-Geral de Alimentação e Veterinária – DGAV) before any study begins. This review process evaluates: a) the necessity of animal use and potential alternatives; b) harm-benefit analysis of the project; c) justification for species/strains and the number of animals involved; d) procedures to be performed, expected levels of suffering, mitigation strategies, refinement of procedures, and well-defined humane endpoints; e) personnel qualifications, and f) housing and care conditions.

The GIMM Vertebrate Animal Facilities are regularly inspected by DGAV and maintained to the highest standards. They are staffed with a dedicated team including designated veterinarians, highly trained technicians, animal caretakers, and an Animal Welfare Officer. This team ensures the animals' health, welfare, and care at all times.

All scientists conducting animal research at GIMM must complete certified Laboratory Animal Science training, in line with the requirements established by the Directive 2010/63/EU. This ensures that everyone involved is adequately trained and committed to ethical, responsible, and high-quality research practices.

**GIMM remains dedicated to advancing biomedical research while upholding the highest standards of animal welfare, ethics, and scientific integrity.** We recognize our responsibility to continuously refine our approaches, adopt emerging alternatives, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue on ethical animal research.

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