

“Permission First or Forgiveness Later?”

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You are a board certified lab animal veterinarian working at a university on the West Coast. A well-funded research project that you are working on involves long-term monitoring of physiologic responses to high fat and low fat diets in mice. Each mouse in the study has a telemeter implanted in the peritoneal cavity that allows for the continuous monitoring of heart rate, blood pressure, and ECG. On a busy Monday morning you are contacted by an animal health technician and asked to examine a mouse that has developed a subcutaneous swelling (possibly an infection) near the site of the telemeter implantation. This adverse consequence has never occurred in the past, therefore, provision for treatment is not included in the experimental protocol. You know, both from the research protocol and from previous experience with the project, that long-term survival of each subject is critical to the success of the research. The principal investigator has always been very cooperative, however, she is out of the country for two weeks collecting research specimens in South Sudan and cannot be contacted. Her graduate student (with a thesis dependent on the outcome) is concerned that treatment of the animal will alter the results of the study, therefore, the graduate student requests that you take no action until the principal investigator returns in 4 days. You believe that this mouse should receive immediate treatment or be euthanized.