

University animal research workers suffer adverse health effects

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Two animal research workers have taken the University to court for exposure to LAA which has caused irreversible side effects. The researchers declared that they were allergic to rodents when they started working at the University in 2003. Despite this, they worked with rats and were exposed to LAA during the course of their employment.

The University was found guilty of breaches of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 which requires an employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all their employees whilst they are at work.

The Health and Safety Executive Inspector, Susan Donnelly, has said the University has '*completely failed to grasp the importance of risk-based health surveillance*'.

The University has said that the safety of people on campus is of paramount importance and if there are ever any issues they will work as swiftly as possible to address them.

One of the ways to avoid falling foul of health and safety duties is to conduct risk-based health surveillance to monitor an individual's fitness for work. This will enable any health conditions to be identified and monitored.

Reviews of health surveillance should be completed at least every 12 months. This should include a review of any known health conditions and the current measures in place that are designed to protect against or prevent any worsening of the health conditions.

As with all health and safety duties the starting point should be an assessment of the risks involved in the work activity to identify the hazards and the appropriate protective and preventative measures.

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