



PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

March 25, 2020

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Via e-mail: [chancellor@unc.edu](mailto:chancellor@unc.edu)

Dear Chancellor Guskiewicz,

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our more than 6.5 million members and supporters worldwide regarding an urgent matter. Based on the repeated and documented failure of University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-Chapel Hill) to meet the provisions of the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, and given the COVID-19 pandemic that is influencing the shut-down of animal experiments around the world,<sup>1</sup> we urge UNC-Chapel Hill to immediately: 1) prohibit approval of new animal protocols and experiments; 2) prohibit breeding and acquisition of new animals for laboratories; 3) finalize and end ongoing animal experiments; and, 4) prove that all of these animals and experiments are concretely advancing human health, and if they're not then switch to superior human-relevant, animal-free research methods.<sup>2</sup>

### **UNC-Chapel Hill's Culture of Noncompliance: Violations to the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals**

According to public records obtained by PETA from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) via the Freedom of Information Act, UNC-Chapel Hill has reported many violations to the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. The following are a few of them: in separate occasions, mice exceeded humane points and were left in pain when laboratory staff failed to follow the approved protocols; a mouse colony was inappropriately handled over years which resulted in the animals being distressed, injured and dead; about 200 fish died when staff members failed to use the adequate type of water in their tanks; a rat died when a graduate student performed an unapproved surgery; and,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/14/coronavirus-pandemic-forces-research-labs-shut-down/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Research-Modernization-Deal-Report-US\\_FINAL\\_2020\\_300.pdf](https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Research-Modernization-Deal-Report-US_FINAL_2020_300.pdf)

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in different incidents, mice died after undergoing unapproved surgical procedures, or receiving expired or wrong medications.

### **COVID-19: Ending Animal Experiments Protects Animals, Staff, and Patients**

As part of its COVID-19 contingency plan, UNC-Chapel Hill is telling experimenters that “[n]on-essential experiments should be delayed.”<sup>3</sup> This begs the question why taxpayer dollars are being used on experiments that can easily be ended or delayed or that involve animals who, apparently, are considered by many universities to be extraneous to the testing in the first place. Equally troubling is that the experiments themselves are not critical to advancing human health, since more than 90 percent of highly promising basic science discoveries (most of which involve animal experiments) do not enter routine clinical use in humans.<sup>4</sup>

We call on UNC-Chapel Hill to publicly release the following information:

- 1) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will continue as part of UNC-Chapel Hill’s COVID-19 response plan (such that they may be categorized as critical, essential, necessary, and/or other similar terminology);
- 2) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will not continue as part of UNC-Chapel Hill’s COVID-19 response plan (such that they may be categorized as extraneous, non-critical, non-essential, ramped down, disposable, unnecessary and/or other similar terminology);
- 3) The number and species of animals who are in experimental protocols covered by item number 1 above (e.g., in an essential and/or similar terminology category), and the number and species of animals who are in experimental protocols covered by item number 2 above (e.g., not in an essential and/or similar terminology category); and,
- 4) The endpoint/disposition of animals used in experimental protocols covered by item number 2 above (e.g., not in an essential and/or similar terminology category), and notice of if, when, and how many of these animals have been and/or will be euthanized, culled, killed, destroyed, disposed or reduced in cage census.

You can contact me by e-mail at [ShalinG@peta.org](mailto:ShalinG@peta.org) or by telephone at 757-962-8325. We look forward to your swift reply to this quickly developing and urgent matter. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



Shalin G. Gala  
Vice President, International Laboratory Methods  
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<sup>3</sup> <https://research.unc.edu/covid-19/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g3387.long>