



PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

April 8, 2020

Lee C. Bollinger, J.D.
Office of the President
Columbia University
202 Low Library, 535 W. 116 St., MC 4309
New York, NY 10027

Via e-mail: officeofthepresident@columbia.edu

Dear President Bollinger,

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 Columbia University University 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,¹ we urge Duke 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.²

Columbia'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, Columbia has reported many violations to the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. The following are a few of them: five adult *Peromyscus* mice died of dehydration due to difficulty in accessing the automatic watering system; four cages of mice were found without water, food, or bedding; mice were handled and euthanized in unapproved procedures; and 25 cages of mice were placed in an unapproved location, had low levels of food and water, and some were overcrowded or contained mold.

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

² https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/The-Research-Modernization-Deal-Report-US_FINAL_2020_300.pdf

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

As part of its COVID-19 contingency plan, Columbia has announced “a rapid ramping down of research activities,”³ which will likely lead to the killing of many animals.⁴ 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.⁵

We call on Columbia to publicly release the following information:

- 1) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will continue as part of Columbia’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 Columbia’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 or by telephone at 757-962-8325. We look forward to your swift reply to this quickly developing and urgent matter. Thank you.

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<https://research.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/SPA/Coronavirus/Message%20from%20Dean%20Goldman%20regarding%20urgent%20ramp-down%20of%20CUIMC%20research.pdf>

⁴ <https://twitter.com/Chiolaboratory/status/1239734186497445888>

⁵ <https://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g3387.long>

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shalin G. Gala". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "S" that loops under the rest of the name.

Shalin G. Gala
Vice President, International Laboratory Methods
Laboratory Investigations Department