



PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

April 15, 2020

William L. Henrich, M.D., MACP
Office of the President
c/o Mireya Martinez
Assistant to the President
The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
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Dear President Henrich,

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 The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) 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 the UTHSCSA 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

UTHSCSA'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, UTHSCSA has reported violations to the PHS Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals. The following are a few of them: studies were performed without being reviewed and approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC); a rat had to be euthanized after being subjected to a foot shock procedure in which the animal jumped and hit his/her head; and mice were administered non-pharmaceutical-grade anesthetics without the IACUC's approval.

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, UTHSCSA urged its experimenters to “DELAY [*sic*] initiation of new, approved animal experiments that would increase the number of cages in-house,” to “focus their efforts on maintaining or decreasing the current number of cages in their rodent colony,” and to “review current rodent cage counts with their staff and remove excess from their census.”³ This will likely lead to the killing of many animals and 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 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.⁴

We call on UTHSCSA to publicly release the following information:

- 1) An itemization of all experimental protocols that will continue as part of UTHSCSA’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 UTHSCSA’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 a critical 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 a critical 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 a critical 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.

³ <https://wp.uthscsa.edu/coronavirus/2020/03/30/03-30-20-vpr-message/>

⁴ <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, looping initial "S" that extends to the left.

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