

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

May 20, 2021

Cameron Carter, M.D.  
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University of California, Davis

Via email: [cscarter@ucdavis.edu](mailto:cscarter@ucdavis.edu)

Dear Dr. Carter,

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing to you as a neuroscientist and on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and our 6.5 million members and supporters to express concerns regarding the May 27th Perspectives in Neuroscience seminar featuring Johns Hopkins University's Shreesh Mysore. **Based on the information presented below, we ask that you consider replacing the current seminar with one featuring modern, ethical, human-relevant, and animal-free science.**

Please see our detailed [scientific critique](#) of Mysore's invasive brain experiments, which he conducts on sensitive and intelligent barn owls to purportedly study the neural correlates of sensory selection and stimulus prioritization in humans. Our critique describes the inherent flaws in these experiments, details the ethical concerns with the procedures the owls endure, and includes a list of human-relevant non-animal research methods that Mysore might consider in the future.

Owls, who are born and raised in captivity in Mysore's laboratory, undergo multiple craniotomies and have bolts surgically attached to their skulls. When he implants and relocates electrodes in the owls' brains, this causes significant damage to their neural tissue, after which the experimenters kill and dissect the owls. The negative effects of captivity, the unnatural testing methods, and the substantive differences in sensory and neural architecture across species make it very unlikely that these harmful experiments will advance human health.

Mysore himself [acknowledges](#) that experimenting on owls whose heads are surgically fixed in place could "change the way the brain is solving problems" and he states that "we might misinterpret what's happening, or misunderstand, if we do this in head-fixed animals." Yet in his experiments, he surgically attaches bolts to owls' skulls in order to hold their heads in a fixed position in addition to locking the animals in

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- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

plastic tube or jacket restraining devices for up to 12 hours at a time, clamping their eyes open, and bombarding them with noises and lights.

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources recently confirmed that Mysore [violated](#) Maryland law in failing to obtain a legally-required permit to possess protected birds for experiments, which are currently slated to use 50 to 60 barn owls, including six just for surgical practice for his staff. Further, we have filed a [first-of-its-kind lawsuit](#) against U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service Administrator Kevin Shea alleging that these taxpayer-funded tests on owls, conducted by Mysore, are unconstitutional and seeking protection from harm for the birds under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA).

There are now several superior ways to study ADHD in human volunteers with sophisticated neuroimaging techniques, including functional MRI, positron emission tomography, transcranial magnetic stimulation, and electroencephalography. Instead of using animals to make indirect inferences about human psychological traits, Mysore could use available technology to study ADHD in humans directly. A UC Davis webinar featuring the use of these sophisticated tools would be much more beneficial to the careers of young bioengineers than a seminar on Mysore's harmful and ineffective experiments on barn owls.

You can contact me directly by e-mail at [KatherineR@peta.org](mailto:KatherineR@peta.org). I am happy to discuss this important matter with you in more detail, or provide additional information if needed. Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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