



August 23, 2022

Patrick Gallagher, Ph.D.
Chancellor
University of Pittsburgh

Via e-mail: chancellor@pitt.edu

Dear Dr. Gallagher:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals U.S.—PETA entities have more than 9 million members and supporters globally—to request that you take personal responsibility for addressing the chronic and egregious animal welfare violations that characterize the treatment of vulnerable animals in the University of Pittsburgh's (Pitt) laboratories.

In our [previous correspondence on April 25, 2017](#)—we shared serious concerns about Pitt's lack of oversight and use of animals in sepsis and other experiments. We cited documentation that animals were being used in painful, invasive procedures; denied pain relief and timely euthanasia; and subjected to dehydration and starvation. We urged you to take action to address Pitt's alarming culture of disregard for basic animal welfare, but the problems persist and animals continue to suffer there. Since our most recent correspondence, PETA U.S. has obtained documents through the Freedom of Information Act that reveal [74 additional violations](#) of federal animal welfare guidelines in Pitt's laboratories between 2017 and 2022.

Among other serious documented issues, the school's experimenters failed to provide more than 100 animals used in painful, invasive procedures with adequate pain relief. For example, pigs, mice, and rats endured spinal cord surgery, pancreatic tumor surgery, lung transplant surgery, brain surgery, tail clipping, post-burn biopsies, and implantation of pumps into their backs—all without pain relief as required in the approved protocol.

On at least six separate occasions, experimenters failed to euthanize rats, mice, and their pups properly and threw them into carcass bags or coolers *while they were still alive*. Seven mouse pups were discarded and found alive in a bag with several dead adult mice. Experimenters violated protocols and caused numerous animals to suffer beyond the established humane endpoints at which euthanasia is indicated in order to eliminate pain and/or distress. For example, lethargic mice held in several enclosures were discovered to be in "obvious distress," suffering from enormous tumors and low bodyweight after staff failed to follow the approved protocol for humane endpoints. A student failed to follow veterinary orders to euthanize three very ill mice—experimenters had infected them with a fungus—and the mice were found dead in their enclosures.

Employees' negligence has resulted in suffering and death for numerous animals. Two monkeys endured severe respiratory distress when their chain collars

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became entangled together. One of the monkeys died and the other sustained bruising and other injuries. Among other incidents, staff euthanized a marmoset monkey after he sustained a broken jaw and facial swelling because a broken hammock clip had pierced his mouth and lower jaw. Two fingers of another marmoset were amputated after he sustained a hand injury. Staff negligence in securing the dividing pan between two enclosures allowed two monkeys to have access to one another, resulting in fighting, and one monkey sustained lacerations. A rabbit was bruised after falling out of a cage that had been left unsecured. On three separate occasions, the temperature in the room where animals were housed dropped so low that several mice and rats died, and a litter of mouse pups was cannibalized by their mother, likely due to cold stress.

Experimenters repeatedly failed to provide animals with even the most basic necessities, including food, water, oxygen, and light. The lights in a room full of mice failed during a holiday break, and the mice were left in total darkness for five days. Staff also failed to perform daily health checks during this time. *In 25 separate incidents*, more than 50 mice died of starvation or dehydration, and many more suffered because they were not given access to food or water. In two incidents, 12 rats died due to a lack of oxygen in the experimental hypoxia chamber they were held in, and 11 frogs developed red leg infections and died because they didn't receive fresh water in their tanks for two days. One tank dried up completely.

Several experimenters deviated from approved protocols and conducted experiments with or otherwise used animals not included in protocols that the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) had approved—suggesting systemic problems in the school's experimentation program. Several experimenters were not even trained or approved to perform procedures on animals. Some principal investigators (PI) repeatedly violated protocols, signaling a long history of chronic violations of basic animal welfare guidelines. One PI (Ivona Pandrea) had her protocol temporarily suspended after racking up several serious violations, including causing four monkeys to become severely anemic and not providing them with monitoring, appropriate treatment, or nutritional support. This came on the heels of earlier violations in which she moved six monkeys with simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) to a necropsy room without putting any warning signs on the door to indicate that there were animals inside or that the room had become a biohazard—placing staff at risk. When this was reported to the senior clinical veterinarian, she expressed surprise, saying that no one had even told her the monkeys were SIV-positive.

Three mice were killed and no data were collected—even though the animals had been used in an experiment funded by more than \$1 million in National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants—because a PI (Gary Thomas) had injected a virus into their brains without approval. In another incident, three mice were euthanized after an experimenter injected them with an unapproved substance. On two separate occasions, 15 live mice were subjected to invasive procedures—including tumor removal surgery and drug injections—that were only approved post-mortem. An experimenter performed multiple serious surgeries on the same animal, including a hind-limb transplant—despite having been approved to conduct only one surgery—and failed to provide them with appropriate pain relief.

The institution's negligence and culture of disregard for basic animal welfare must not continue. Such problems will persist unless Pitt implements a strong deterrent. The university must inform PIs that if they violate federal animal welfare regulations or guidelines in connection with their laboratories, the

IACUC will withdraw approval for the protocol, revoke the investigator's animal experimentation privileges, and permanently prohibit their access to all animal laboratories.

In fiscal year 2021, Pitt received nearly \$600 million in taxpayer funds from NIH. Funding agencies—and the public—expect that institutions will comply with minimal animal welfare regulations and guidelines with the provision of such funding. The university's failures represent an abject violation of the public's trust. We ask that you address this serious matter immediately and implement PETA scientists' [Research Modernization Deal](#)—a strategy for replacing animal experiments with modern, human-relevant, animal-free research methods.

I am available to discuss these issues with you and can be reached at 541-848-7465 or AndreaK@peta.org. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrea Kuchy', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andréa Kuchy, Ph.D.
Research Associate
Laboratory Investigations