



May 6, 2026

Professor Deep Saini
President and Vice-Chancellor
McGill University

Via e-mail

Dear Prof. Saini:

Thank you in advance for your time. I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have more than 10.4 million members and supporters globally—regarding an ongoing Pentagon-funded experiment inflicting vision loss in rats at McGill University. **Based on the information presented below, we urge you to immediately end this cruel and wasteful animal testing in favor of superior human-relevant research methods.**

Records Confirm Animal Use for Vision Loss Experiments

Location	McGill University, Canada
Award Number	Award #: W81XWH-19-1-0853; Proposal #: VR180080 ¹
Funder	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
Dates	September 30, 2019 – September 29, 2026
Obligated Amount	\$5,863,701
Summary	Experimenter Leonard Levin subjects rats to traumatic optic nerve injury, leading to degeneration of retinal ganglion cells and vision loss. He then tests experimental drugs on the animals, who undergo imaging to track neurodegeneration and recovery.
Critique	Humans have up to 1.7 million optic nerve axons, ² whereas rats have about 135,000, ³ highlighting big species differences. Experts warn that "...the retina of each species is well adapted to the visual theatre into which that species is born... Analogies between different species may, therefore,... be misleading." ⁴

¹ Project Grant W81XWH-19-1-0853—Novel Diagnostic, Prognostic, and Therapeutic Tools for Battlefield Optic Nerve Trauma. DTIC. Accessed April 14, 2026.

<https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.8587781>.

² Jonas JB, Schmidt AM, Müller-Bergh JA, Schlötzer-Schrehardt UM, Naumann GO. Human optic nerve fiber count and optic disc size. *Inves Ophthalmol Vis Sci.* 1992; 33(6), 2012–2018. <https://iovs.arvojournals.org/article.aspx?articleid=2161180>.

³ Fukui Y, Hayasaka S, Bedi KS, Ozaki HS, Takeuchi Y. Quantitative study of the development of the optic nerve in rats reared in the dark during early postnatal life. *J Anat.* 1991; 174:37-47. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1256041/>.

⁴ Takeuchi Y. Quantitative study of the development of the optic nerve in rats reared in the dark during early postnatal life. *J Anat.* 1991; 174:37-47. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC1256041/>.

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- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

U.S. Federal Agencies are Shifting Away from Animal Testing

Because this McGill University experiment relies heavily on U.S. government funding, we must emphasize that U.S. federal agencies are undergoing a massive shift away from animal testing. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),⁵ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),⁶ U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA),⁷ U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH),^{8,9} U.S. Navy,¹⁰ and others have announced historic plans to phase out animal testing,^{11,12} in alignment with PETA's Research Modernization NOW strategic framework for transforming research toward superior human-relevant methods.¹³ We hope McGill University will emulate this transition away from cruel and wasteful experiments on animals.

You can contact me at MaggieW@peta.org. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,



Maggie Wisniewska, Ph.D.
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Laboratory Investigations Department

⁵ Grimm D. November 21, 2025. Exclusive: CDC to end all monkey research. *Science*. <https://www.science.org/content/article/exclusive-cdc-end-all-monkey-research>.

⁶ EPA January 26, 2026. *ICYMI: Administrator Zeldin gets EPA back on track to eliminate animal testing after Biden admin halted phase out*. <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/icymi-administrator-zeldin-gets-epa-back-track-eliminate-animal-testing-after-biden>.

⁷ FDA. *FDA Announces Plan to Phase Out Animal Testing Requirement for Monoclonal Antibodies and Other Drugs*. April 10, 2025. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-announces-plan-phase-out-animal-testing-requirement-monoclonal-antibodies-and-other-drugs>.

⁸ NIH. *NIH to prioritize human-based research technologies*. April 29, 2025. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-prioritize-human-based-research-technologies>

⁹ NIH. March 18, 2026. *NIH invests \$150 million in human-based research to reduce use of animal models*. <https://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-invests-150-million-human-based-research-reduce-use-animal-models>.

¹⁰ Fox News. *Navy halts dog and cat experiments; PETA writes Hegseth about US taxpayer-funded animal tests abroad*. May 31, 2025. *Fox News*. <https://www.foxnews.com/us/navy-halts-dog-cat-experiments-peta-writes-hegseth-about-us-taxpayer-funded-animal-tests-abroad>.

¹¹ PETA. *The Trump administration's achievements for science and animals*. Accessed July 14, 2025. <https://www.peta.org/misc/the-trump-administrations-achievements-for-science-and-animals/>.

¹² Bedard P. May 28, 2025. *Trump cheered as 'best friend of animals' after research grants nixed*. *Washington Examiner*. Accessed May 29, 2025. <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/washington-secrets/3423973/trump-cheered-best-friend-of-animals-after-research-grants-nixed/>.

¹³ PETA. *Research Modernization NOW*. April 2026. <https://science.peta.org/>.