



May 6, 2026

Dr. Andy J. Smith, MD, MSc, FRCSC, FACS  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

Via e-mail

Dear Dr. Smith:

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 invasive, inner ear experiment on rats at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. **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.**

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
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OF ANIMALS

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### Records Confirm Animal Use in Hearing Impairment Experiments

<b>Location</b>	Sunnybrook Research Institute, Canada
<b>Grant Number</b>	Award #: HT9425-24-1-0697; Proposal #: RH230020 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Funder</b>	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
<b>Dates</b>	August 1, 2024 – July 31, 2027
<b>Obligated Amount</b>	\$824,505
<b>Summary</b>	Experimenter Alain Dabdoub subjects rats to auditory neuropathy to test MRI-guided focused ultrasound (FUS) as a method for delivering gene therapy to the inner ear. He uses focused ultrasound to temporarily open the blood–labyrinth barrier, allowing viral vectors carrying neurogenic genes to enter the animals' cochlea and act on inner ear cells, after which he monitors them for changes in auditory function and neuronal structure and the animals are likely killed.
<b>Critique</b>	Human primary auditory neuron degeneration follows a distinct trajectory not replicated by induced trauma in rats living in a laboratory shielded from chronic noise, which characterizes human life in industrialized societies. <sup>2</sup> Such rats do not develop the massive high-

<sup>1</sup>Project Grant HT9425-24-1-0697—Novel Therapeutic and Delivery Strategies for Primary Auditory Neuron Regeneration. DTIC. Accessed April 10, 2026.

<https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.14084341>

<sup>2</sup> Makary CA, Shin J, Kujawa SG, Liberman MC, Merchant SN. Age-related primary cochlear neuronal degeneration in human temporal bones. *J Assoc Res Otolaryngol*. 2011; 12(6):711-7. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21748533/>.

#### Entities:

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

frequency hearing loss that is the hallmark of industrialized human life. <sup>3</sup>
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### **U.S. Federal Agencies are Shifting Away from Animal Testing**

Because this Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre 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),<sup>4</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),<sup>5</sup> U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA),<sup>6</sup> U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH),<sup>7,8</sup> U.S. Navy,<sup>9</sup> and others have announced historic plans to phase out animal testing,<sup>10,11</sup> in alignment with PETA's Research Modernization NOW strategic framework for transforming research toward superior human-relevant methods.<sup>12</sup> We hope Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre will emulate this transition away from cruel and wasteful experiments on animals.

You can contact me at [MaggieW@peta.org](mailto: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.  
Science Policy Advisor - International Laboratory Methods  
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<sup>3</sup> Wu PZ, O'Malley JT, de Gruttola V, Liberman MC. Age-Related Hearing Loss Is Dominated by Damage to Inner Ear Sensory Cells, Not the Cellular Battery That Powers Them. *J Neurosci*. 2020; 12;40(33):6357-6366.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32690619/>.

<sup>4</sup> 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>.

<sup>5</sup> 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>.

<sup>6</sup> 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>.

<sup>7</sup> 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>

<sup>8</sup> 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>.

<sup>9</sup> 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>.

<sup>10</sup> 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/>.

<sup>11</sup> 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/>.

<sup>12</sup> PETA. *Research Modernization NOW*. April 2026. <https://science.peta.org/>.