PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

Washington
1536 16th St. N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
202-483-PETA

Los Angeles
2154 W. Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90026
323-644-PETA

Norfolk
501 Front St.
Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-PETA

Info@peta.org
PETA.org

May 6, 2026

Professor Benoit-Antoine Bacon, Ph.D.
President and Vice-Chancellor
The University of British Columbia

Via e-mail

Dear Prof. Bacon:

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 ongoing Pentagon-funded experiments on animals at the University of British Columbia (UBC). **Based on the information presented below, we urge you to end this cruel and wasteful animal testing in favor of superior human-relevant research.**

Records Confirm Animal Use for Invasive Experiments

Location	University of British Columbia, Canada
Grant Number	Award #: HT9425-24-1-0912 Proposal #: SC230114[1]
Funder	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
Dates	$1,156,654
Obligated Amount	September 30, 2024 – September 29, 2027
Summary	Experimenter Brian Kwon damages Yucatan mini-pigs' thoracic spinal cords to induce paralysis and severe bladder dysfunction and to test a sacral neuromodulation system for bladder control. He then implants electrical generators in their flanks, electrodes in their sacral nerve roots, and pressure sensors inside their bladders. The animals are forced to endure 13 weeks of repeated electrical stimulation to manipulate their urination reflexes.
Critique	Major differences exist between the anatomical organization of the sacral nerve roots in humans and pigs—the Yucatan pig spinal cord terminates much lower in the sacrum, making results from these animals poor predictors of human clinical outcomes.[2]

[1] Project Grant HT9425-24-1-0912—Neuromodulation for improving bladder function in a large animal model of SCI. DTIC. Accessed March 6, 2026. https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.14358071.

[2] Busscher I, Polender BA, van der Veen AJ, Diepstraten FA, Veldhuizen AG, Burgerhof JG, van Dijk M. Comparative anatomical dimensions of the complete human and porcine spine. *Euro Sci J.* 2010: 19(7), 1104–1114. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00586-010-1326-9.

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

Location	University of British Columbia, Canada
Grant Number	Award #: W81XWH-21-2-0042; Proposal #: PR201092[3]
Funder	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
Dates	$4,269,089
Obligated Amount	September 30, 2021 – September 29, 2026
Summary	Experimenter Stephen Withers uses pigs to test a whole blood conversion unit (WBCU) purportedly designed to transform A or B type blood into universal O type using enzymes derived from the human gut microbiome. After engineering enzymatic cocktails that strip antigens from red blood cells, he subjects animals to various tests, which may involve transfusing modified blood into pigs and monitoring them for adverse reactions.
Critique	Unlike humans, pigs express the Alpha-Gal carbohydrate on their cell surfaces; it triggers a powerful immune response in humans but is absent in pigs.[4] As such, wild-type pigs can't reliably predict how human antibodies react to modified blood.

Location	University of British Columbia, Canada
Grant Number	Award #: HT9425-23-1-0777; Proposal #: SC220107[5]
Funder	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
Dates	September 30, 2023 – September 29, 2026
Obligated Amount	$1,731,421
Summary	Experimenter Babak Shadgan subjects Yucatan miniature pigs to spinal cord contusion and compression injuries, and he catheterizes their spinal cords to test an optical near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS) sensor to monitor tissue perfusion and oxygenation. Pigs then undergo hemodynamic manipulation, including drug-induced blood pressure control and measurement of metabolic markers, after which they are killed.
Critique	Given the translational gap in extrapolating results from animal tests to human outcomes,[6] and the known variability and bias in experimental spinal cord injury studies,[7] it is unethical to subject 24 pigs to invasive spinal cord injuries—especially since human-relevant data on NIRS is already being collected.[8]

[3] Project Grant W81XWH-21-2-0042—Toward Universal Whole Blood in the Battlefield. DTIC. Accessed April 9, 2026. https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.9843106.
[4] Galili U. Anti-Gal: an abundant human natural antibody of multiple pathogeneses and clinical benefits. *Immunol.* 2013: 140(1):1-11. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23578170/.
[5] Project Grant HT9425-23-1-0777—Advanced Physiologic Monitoring at the Site of Spinal Cord Injury. DTIC. Accessed April 10, 2026. https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.13859054.
[6] Perel P, Roberts I, Sena E, Wheble P, Briscoe C, Sandercock P, Macleod M, Mignini LE, Jayaram P, Khan KS. Comparison of treatment effects between animal experiments and clinical trials: systematic review. *BMJ*. 2007: 27;334(7586):197. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17175568/
[7] Watzlawick R, Antonic A, Sena ES, Kopp MA, Rind J, Dirnagl U, Macleod M, Howells DW, Schwab JM. Outcome heterogeneity and bias in acute experimental spinal cord injury: A meta-analysis. Neurology. 2019 Jul 2;93(1):e40-e51. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31175207/
[8] *Ibid.*

Location	University of British Columbia, Canada
Grant Number	Award #: W81XWH-22-1-0929; Proposal #: SC210078[9]
Funder	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
Dates	September 30, 2022 – September 29, 2026
Obligated Amount	$1,743,216
Summary	Experimenter Andrei Krassioukov uses 140 Wistar rats to test the efficacy of transcutaneous stimulation (TCS) for restoring autonomic functions—such as cardiovascular, bladder, and bowel control—after spinal cord injury (SCI). He subjects the animals to severe thoracic contusion injuries, after which the rats undergo TCS or sham stimulation with physiological monitoring.
Critique	TCS is safe for human trials, making this SCI rat test wasteful. Such animal tests have outcome variability and experimental bias, undermining reproducibility and interpretability.[10]

Location	University of British Columbia, Canada
Grant Number	Award #: HT9425-23-1-0626; Proposal #: RT220003[11]
Funder	Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs
Dates	August 1, 2023 – July 31, 2026
Obligated Amount	$525,000
Summary	Experimenter Megan Levings surgically grafts donor skin patches and entire hind limbs onto recipient mice who have been altered to carry human immune components. These animals are then injected with an engineered form of "suppressor" immune cells, while being maintained on immunosuppressive drugs. The animals are monitored for graft survival before being killed.
Critique	While these mice are engineered to carry human immune components, they lack the full systemic architecture and environmental "memory" of a human immune system, often leading to a failure in predicting how engineered cells will behave in actual patients.[12] In addition, because mice in laboratories "live in abnormally hygienic specific pathogen-free… facilities,"[13] their immune systems resemble those of

[9] Project Grant W81XWH-22-1-0929—Noninvasive Spinal Cord Stimulation for Recovery of Autonomic Function After Spinal Cord Injury: Moving from Mechanisms to Clinical Practice. DTIC. Accessed April 9, 2026. https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.13056021.

[10] Watzlawick R, Antonic A, Sena ES, Kopp MA, Rind J, Dirnagl U, Macleod M, Howells DW, Schwab JM. Outcome heterogeneity and bias in acute experimental spinal cord injury: A meta-analysis. *Neurol*. 2019: 2;93(1):e40-e51. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31175207/.

[11] Project Grant HT9425-23-1-0626—Engineering an Effective CAR Treg Combination Therapy to Control VCA Rejection. DTIC. Accessed April 8, 2026. https://dtic.dimensions.ai/details/grant/grant.13741148.

[12] Mestas J, Hughes CC. Of mice and not men: Relevant differences in evolutionary signatures to immune responses. *J Immunol*. 2004: 172(5), 2731–2738. https://doi.org/10.4049/jimmunol.172.5.2731.

[13] Beura LK, Hamilton SE, Bi K, Schenkel JM, Odumade OA, Casey KA, Thompson EA, Fraser KA, Rosato PC, Filali-Mouhim A, Sekaly RP, Jenkins MK, Vezys V, Haining WN, Jameson SC, Masopust D. Normalizing the environment recapitulates adult human immune traits in laboratory mice. *Nature.* 2016: 28;532(7600):512-6. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27096360/.

	newborn humans more than adults; consequently, the outcomes of such testing frequently fail to translate to the complex immune environments of human transplant recipients.

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

Because these UBC experiments on animals rely 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),[14] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),[15] U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA),[16] U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH),[17,18] U.S. Navy,[19] and others have announced historic plans to phase out animal testing,[20,21] in alignment with PETA's Research Modernization NOW strategic framework for transforming research toward superior human-relevant methods.[22] We hope UBC 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.
Science Policy Advisor - International Laboratory Methods Division
Laboratory Investigations Department

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[14] 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.

[15] 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.

[16] 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.

[17] 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

[18] 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.

[19] 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.

[20] 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/.

[21] 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/.

[22] PETA. Research Modernization NOW. April 2026. https://science.peta.org/.