

March 23, 2022

Dear Congressman,

On behalf of the 24 undersigned organizations representing a wide range of biomedical professional societies, institutions, and individual researchers, we are writing regarding the letter you co-signed to Dr. Lawrence Tabak, Acting Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), which calls for the immediate suspension of funding for certain new projects involving animal research. We are writing to reiterate our strong support for the appropriate and ethical use of animals in research to help understand and treat diseases and improve the lives of patients and their families.

Animal research remains vital to our mission to understand diseases, discover targeted therapies, alleviate suffering, and improve our quality of life. Unfortunately, many animal rights groups have engaged in campaigns of fear, threats, and disinformation with the single-minded goal of ending access to animals used in life-saving research. If these groups succeed in persuading the federal government to end access to animal models, we may see a reduction in vaccine development and myriad other breakthroughs as animal models play a major role in advancing biomedical research.

Biomedical research projects involving animals are governed by a strict structure of laws, regulations, and guidelines and continue to yield invaluable data in the process of discovering new therapies to treat, cure, and prevent disease. These studies involving animals are done only when necessary and provide the safety and efficacy measures required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) before medications and treatments can proceed to human clinical trials. Registered institutions that conduct animal research in the U.S. have a committee required by the federal Animal Welfare Act, which reviews proposed research studies involving animals to ensure that alternatives are available, confirm they have not previously conducted the research, and the use of animals is kept to the approximate number required for relevant research results. These institutions are subject to annual unannounced USDA inspections. Studies funded by the NIH also report to the NIH's Office of Laboratory Welfare (OLAW).

The biomedical research community strongly supports robust oversight of animal research, including the laws, regulations, and institutional policies that ensure the humane treatment, welfare, and safety of animals utilized in scientific research. We are gravely concerned the letter to Dr. Tabak incorrectly describes the use and necessity of animal models employed in biomedical research and fails to address specifically why animal models are appropriate and necessary in biomedical research. The letter cites high failure rates for new drugs to treat Alzheimer's disease, sepsis, and stroke as evidence that animal research fails to yield new therapies. However, the letter does not mention two leading drugs for Alzheimer's were developed with the help of laboratory mice, rats, and non-human primates.<sup>1 2 3</sup> Successful stem cell-based stroke rehabilitation treatments were first tested with rats and other laboratory

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<sup>1</sup> Memantine: a review of studies into its safety and efficacy in treating Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, *Clinical Interventions in Aging* journal, available online at <https://www.dovepress.com/memantine-a-review-of-studies-into-its-safety-and-efficacy-in-treating-peer-reviewed-fulltext-article-CIA>

<sup>2</sup> Efficacy of acetylcholinesterase inhibitors in Alzheimer's disease, ScienceDirect, available online at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0028390820304202>

<sup>3</sup> A nonhuman primate model of early Alzheimer's disease pathologic change: Implications for disease pathogenesis, ScienceDirect, available online at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1552526018332461>

animals.<sup>4</sup> And even though much remains to be learned about sepsis, studying animal models of sepsis has greatly improved our understanding of the inflammatory mechanisms that lead to sepsis.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the success of the biomedical research community to deliver safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines, was only possible because of research using animal models including non-human primates. To remain at the forefront of pandemic preparedness and discovery for other diseases in search of a cure, animal research remains critical.

We encourage you to work with the scientific community to promote future advancements in research that enhance rather than undermine scientific innovation and urge you to reconsider your stance on the use of animals in necessary, humane, and ethical biomedical research. Thank you for your consideration in supporting the advancement of biomedical research. Please contact us for any additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,

American Academy of Neurology  
American Association for Laboratory Animal Science  
American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges  
American Brain Coalition  
American Heart Association  
American Psychological Association  
American Society for Investigative Pathology  
American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics  
American Veterinary Medical Association  
Americans for Medical Progress  
Animal Health Institute  
Association of American Medical Colleges  
Association of American Universities  
Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities  
Council on Governmental Relations  
Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology  
LabCorp Drug Development  
National Association for Biomedical Research  
New Jersey Association for Biomedical Research (NJABR)  
Society for Neuroscience  
The Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO)  
The Jackson Laboratory  
The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research  
The Pennsylvania Society for Biomedical Research (PSBR)

CC: Dr. Lawrence Tabak, Acting Director at the National Institutes of Health

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<sup>4</sup>Animal Research Leads to Promising Results for First Clinical Trial of Stem Cell Therapy for Stroke, Speaking of Research, <https://speakingofresearch.com/2013/05/28/animal-research-leads-to-promising-results-for-first-clinical-trial-of-stem-cell-therapy-for-stroke>

<sup>5</sup> Sepsis as a model of SIRS, *Frontiers in Bioscience*, available online at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19273383/>