



MEDIA RELEASE

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**International Animal Rights Organizations Urge Effective COVID-19 Research
During World Week for Animals in Laboratories**

International anti-vivisection organisations join forces to reject animal-based vaccine research and call for more funding of modern, scientifically-valid methods.

World Week for Animals In Laboratories Starts April 20 and Ends April 26

This World Week for Animals in Laboratories, a global coalition of four anti-vivisection organisations representing supporters in Australia, New Zealand, the U.K., and the U.S. are uniting to support ethical researchers who are embracing modern methods to accelerate research for COVID-19 vaccines. The National Institutes of Health in the U.S. has made a significant move to acknowledge the lengthy and unreliable nature of animal “models” of disease by beginning clinical human trials without waiting for all the results from animal experiments.

As the global health crisis continues, there has never been a greater need for fast-moving and effective research. The unprecedented demand for COVID-19 treatments necessitates an urgent shift towards reliable, human-relevant medical studies for COVID-19 treatments and vaccines, as well as for the prevention of similar pandemics in the future.

The new innovative research being used to study COVID-19 includes three-dimensional reconstructed human respiratory tissue models and biological sampling of infected patients, which provide real hope of combatting COVID-19 and inspires better preparation to address future pandemics.

A plethora of ethical and effective research methods are available to study human diseases that do not require animals such as epidemiology studies, computer-based techniques, human cell and tissue cultures, tissue engineering, organ-on-a-chip microfluidics, and many more.

While many researchers are using non-animal methods, the COVID-19 outbreak has also triggered the approval of millions of dollars in grants to fund animal-based research using primates, ferrets, and mice. Not only will any information from this research not be available for years, animals are not predictive models of the human response. Fewer than 12% of drugs entering clinical trials result in an approved medicine (1), despite showing positive results for safety and efficacy in animal experiments. This archaic practice results in wasted lives, both human and animal, as well as squandered money, with the drug development process estimated to cost up to \$2.5 billion USD per treatment (2).

“Using non-human primates, mice and any animals to find a cure for viruses, such as the coronavirus, which won’t be the last one we see, is not only unethical but produces vastly inaccurate results and quite simply takes too long,” urges **“Project Nim” primatologist and In Defense of Animals board member, Robert Ingersoll**, who is backing the call for ethical research.

Those in favour of human-relevant research are being asked to [sign a letter of support](#) thanking research institutions pursuing innovative and ethical research. Ethical research institutes include **MatTek Life Sciences, Epithelix, Immundnz, Institute for In Vitro Sciences, STEMCELL Technologies, Yumab, and InSphero**.

This research provides real hope of combatting COVID-19 and better prepares us to address future pandemics. Signatures will be collected until the end of Friday, May 1.

“We need to fund research that does not use animals, so we are ready with models that are quicker, more efficient, more cost-effective and have better predictive outcomes,” said **Dr. Andre Menache, Veterinary Surgeon and Scientific Consultant**.

#United4AnimalsInLabs is a movement that encourages scientists around the world to continue humane research that eliminates reliance on outdated animal experiments so that human health, animal welfare and the economy may benefit.

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NOTES:

1. Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (2016) <http://phrma-docs.phrma.org/sites/default/files/pdf/biopharmaceutical-industry-profile.pdf>

2. Ahadian et al (2017)
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/adhm.201700506>
3. Over the past few years researchers have repeatedly shown that animal studies lack scientific rigour; they are often prone to biases for instance, and are sloppily reported in scientific journals.
<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2015/10/most-animal-research-studies-may-not-avoid-key-biases>
<http://www.science.sciencemag.org/content/357/6358/1337.full>
4. In 2018, scientists cited hundreds of biomedical studies from journals including 'Nature', 'Science', and the 'Journal of the American Medical Association' to show animal modelling is ineffective, misleading to scientists, unable to prevent the development of dangerous drugs, and prone to prevent the development of useful drugs. Legislation still requires animal experimentation prior to human testing even though the pharmaceutical sector has better options that were unavailable when animal modelling was first mandated.
<http://www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/basr.12134>
5. World Day For Animals In Laboratories is over 40 years old, having been established in 1979 and is observed every year on April 24. The surrounding week has come to be known as "World Week for Animals In Laboratories."
6. The #United4AnimalsInLabs coalition consists of [Animal Justice Project](#) (U.K.), [Humane Research Australia](#), [In Defense of Animals](#) (U.S.) and the [New Zealand Anti-Vivisection Society](#).