



OHSU grieves loss of two nonhuman primates

August 28, 2020 [Research](#)



OHSU media release logo

Background

On Aug. 13, 2020, an animal care technician placed a 6-foot-tall rack of nonhuman primate cages into a cage-washing machine and turned it on, unaware that there were two monkeys in one of the top cages. The technician quickly realized the error and immediately called veterinary staff for help, but one monkey died and the second was later humanely euthanized. All cage washing immediately ceased and the director of animal care and use, Vickie Jarrell, Ph.D., was notified. The technician involved had successfully completed OHSU's intensive training and mentoring processes for all those involved in animal care.

Statement

The Oregon National Primate Research Center (ONPRC) at Oregon Health & Science University is dedicated to the humane, respectful treatment and the best possible veterinary

care for the nearly 5,000 nonhuman primates at the center. Many of these animals are part of a breeding colony that supports NIH-funded research dedicated to improving human and animal health, including ongoing research into potential vaccines and treatments for COVID-19.

Dozens of highly trained veterinary professionals engage with these animals on a daily basis to ensure their ongoing safety, enrichment, health and well-being. These dedicated individuals develop strong bonds with the animals entrusted to their care -- often for many years, and, in some cases, decades -- so, the accidental death of any animal is deeply distressing and their passing is grieved by all -- we deeply regret that this accident occurred.

As soon as the director of animal use and care, Vickie Jarrell, Ph.D., learned of the accident, she reported the serious event to the regulatory agencies that oversee animal research, the [Office for Laboratory Animal Welfare \(OLAW\) of the National Institutes of Health](#) and the [United States Department of Agriculture. AAALAC International](#), an organization that offers voluntary accreditation for animal research programs, also was contacted.

OHSU's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee is conducting an internal investigation, which will take several weeks to complete. OHSU Chief Research Officer Peter Barr-Gillespie, Ph.D., will commission an independent, external review committee to more broadly examine hiring, training, safety and operations in animal care at ONPRC.

OHSU understands and fully embraces the responsibility to provide compassionate, state-of-the-art health care that comes with the privilege of working with animals. Knowledge gained through biomedical research in relevant animal models is essential to developing new ways to identify, prevent, treat or eradicate disease and to improve human and animal health. There are [numerous examples](#) of how primate research has accelerated medical progress for humans.

OHSU supports and adheres to the appropriately stringent [Health Research Extension Act](#) and Public Health Service Policy; the [Animal Welfare Act](#) and Animal Welfare Regulations. As soon as any serious issue or event is identified, OHSU immediately takes action to correct it, puts a mitigation plan in place to prevent it from recurring, and self-reports to OLAW and the USDA. USDA inspectors visit OHSU at least once yearly to review the animals, facilities, food supply, medications and records. Their reports, once finalized, are publicly available on the USDA website for anyone interested in viewing them.

For more than 30 years, the ONPRC has continuously been accredited by [AAALAC, International's voluntary accreditation process](#). The most recent accreditation visit in 2019 led to a laudatory review. Animal research at ONPRC and other world-class universities and institutions around the world has led to countless life-saving medical discoveries, including: vaccines for polio, smallpox, mumps and measles; a vaccine platform for HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and West Nile virus; new treatments for infertility, heart disease and diabetes; breakthroughs in Parkinson's disease, blindness, stroke and depression.

OHSU only conducts animal studies when other nonanimal research methods, such as laboratory-based cell culture, simulation, gene chips or computer modeling are scientifically

inadequate and/or when experimental designs are too dangerous for human participants. We look forward to a time when nonanimal research methods are capable of faithfully modeling the complexity of a living system; however, we are many years away from realizing that goal. The global scientific community doesn't completely understand how a single cell works, and nonanimal research methods currently are incapable of interpreting it fully.

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