



June 25, 2020

Gary Gibbons, M.D.
Director, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
Building 31, Room 5A48E
31 Center Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892
Via email: gibbonsgh@mail.nih.gov

Dear Dr. Gibbons:

On behalf of the New England Anti-Vivisection Society (NEAVS), including our membership throughout the United States, I am writing to relay our concern regarding troubling evidence of ineffectual research and potential animal suffering taking place at Virginia Commonwealth University and to respectfully ask that you consider ending the funding of these experiments.

Document We Reviewed

NEAVS reviewed Virginia Commonwealth University's grant application to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute for the study entitled, "High Efficiency Delivery of Surfactant Aerosols to Infants without Intubation."¹ This document was released to us due to a Freedom of Information Act request.

Finding: Induced Ferret Lung Injuries

Under this grant, Virginia Commonwealth University is forcibly subjecting twenty ferrets to lung injury. Researchers are administering aerosol surfactants into ten ferrets' lungs and liquid into another ten ferrets' lungs via the nose. The proposal notes the limited conclusions that may be drawn from the study's findings by stating: "considering that the nasal structure of the ferret is considerably more complex than that of an infant, [nose-to-lung] delivery in a ferret provides a significant challenge and should provide a conservative estimate of lung delivery efficiency in an infant with similar lung size." The letter also discusses anticipated difficulty "with balancing sufficient lung injury for evaluating efficacy with survival," meaning that these ferrets' are undergoing potentially painful procedures and subsequently losing their lives for tenuous scientific conclusions.

Request: Terminate Funding for the Surfactant Aerosol Experiment

While this study may be conducted in compliance with existing Animal Welfare laws and regulations, it proves to be wasteful and cruel. The nasal disparities between human infants and ferrets calls into question any findings this research yields.

¹Grant 1 R01 HL 139673-01 REVISED, awarded 03/06/2019.

Such misuse of time, money, and resources warrants your intervention to immediately end these experiments and to enact a policy against funding any similar cruel research protocols in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nathan Herschler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nathan Herschler, Executive Director
New England Anti-Vivisection Society (NEAVS)