



September 13, 2024

The Honorable Ted Wheeler
Mayor of Portland

Via e-mail: mayorwheeler@portlandoregon.gov

Dear Mayor Wheeler:

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 9 million members and supporters globally—regarding the use of live animals in the obstetrics and gynecology (OB/GYN) physician residency training program at Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU). **Based on the information presented below, we ask that you urge OHSU to end this invasive and deadly practice, which is out of sync with dozens of peer OB/GYN physician residency training programs that don't use live animals, deprives future healthcare professionals of a quality human-relevant education, and taints the animal-friendly reputation of Portland, which you stated is the “#1 best city for vegetarians and vegans.”**¹

Records Confirm the Use of Live Animals in OHSU's OB/GYN Residency

Records show that from 2019 to 2021, at least 64 students in OHSU's OB/GYN physician residency training program participated in five laboratory exercises^{2,3,4} that involved repeatedly cutting into up to 48 live female pigs to perform invasive practice surgeries.^{5,6,7,8}

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¹Wheeler T. Portland is proud to be named the #1 best city for vegetarians and vegans! X. October 8, 2022. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://x.com/tedwheeler/status/1577051492582043649?lang=en>

²OHSU. USDA and Porcine OB/GYN Data 2021. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/USDA-and-Porcine-ObGyn-Data-2021-redacted.pdf>

³OHSU. USDA and porcine OB/GYN data 2020. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/USDA-and-Porcine-ObGyn-Data-2020-redacted.pdf>

⁴OHSU. USDA and porcine OB/GYN data 2021. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/USDA-and-Porcine-ObGyn-Data-2021-redacted.pdf>

⁵OHSU. IACUC Protocol IP00817. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IACUC-protocol-IP00817.pdf-redacted.pdf>

⁶OHSU. High fidelity simulation-manikin based ObGyn post-partum skills. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ObGyn-Curriculum-HighFidelity.pdf>

⁷OHSU. OB skills. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/OB-Skills-2019-2021-Objectives-and-Equipment-redacted.pdf>

⁸OHSU. Porcine laboratory surgical tasks. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Porcine-Laboratory-Surgical-Tasks-redacted.pdf>

Entities:

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

Other records⁹ show that several pigs used in the program have suffered from abrasions,¹⁰ “social incompatibility,”¹¹ cardiac distress,¹² “sustained arrhythmia,”¹³ abdominal bleed-out,¹⁴ and other issues. After trainees dissect the animals’ organs in misguided attempts to learn human medicine, any surviving pigs are killed.

Furthermore, OHSU wasted more than \$13,000 to purchase and kill 14 female pigs between March 24, 2022, and April 20, 2023, for its OB/GYN physician residency training.^{15,16,17} These funds could be put to better use by instead acquiring advanced human-relevant simulation models, as many accredited OB/GYN residency training programs have already done.

Newly Obtained E-Mails Show Internal Controversy for OB/GYN Pig Lab

According to public records that PETA recently obtained from OHSU, an individual who appears to be affiliated with the leadership team of the university’s OB/GYN residency program stated, “Let’s set up a meeting to discuss utility of the pig labs. . . . I met with chiefs last night and most of them do NOT [*sic*] find the pig lab to be useful.”¹⁸ In addition, after hearing from PETA supporters who urged OHSU to ban the use of live animals in its OB/GYN residency program, the chair of OHSU’s OB/GYN department, Dr. Aaron Caughey, stated in an e-mail on April 28, 2023, “We ([*redacted*] and I) have mixed feelings toward the [live-pig] labs.”¹⁹ In addition, an OB/GYN physician resident at OHSU expressed unwillingness to use live animals in the Surgical Skills Lab, writing, “I do not want to participate in the live porcine [pig] portion.”²⁰

Dozens of OB/GYN Physician Residency Training Programs Don’t Use Live Animals

OHSU’s reliance on live-animal training methods makes it an outlier among its peer-accredited institutions that opt for more advanced, human-relevant techniques instead. According to PETA’s ongoing survey of OB/GYN residency programs that are accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education, more than 100 such programs have confirmed that they don’t use live animals in their OB/GYN physician residency training.²¹

⁹OHSU. Responsive Records. Animal medical records. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Animal-Medical-Records-ohsu-obgyn.pdf>

¹⁰*Id.* Pages 5, 12, 20, 61, and 67.

¹¹*Id.* Page 20.

¹²*Id.* Page 80.

¹³*Id.* Page 87.

¹⁴*Id.* Page 51.

¹⁵OHSU. Responsive Records. April 6, 2023, Invoice. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-04-06-invoice.pdf>

¹⁶OHSU. Responsive Records. April 20, 2023, Invoice. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2023-04-20-invoice.pdf>

¹⁷OHSU. Responsive Records. March 24, 2022, Invoice. Accessed September 9, 2024.

<https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2022-03-24-invoice.pdf>

¹⁸OHSU. Responsive Records. Correspondence re OB/GYN residency program. April 28, 2023. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/email-re-utility-of-pig-lab.pdf>

¹⁹OHSU. Responsive Records. Correspondence re OB/GYN residency program. April 28, 2023. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/april-28-ohsu-email-caughey.pdf>

²⁰OHSU. Responsive Records. Correspondence re surgical skills lab. March 24, 2023. Accessed September 9, 2024. https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/resident-not-participating-in-pig-lab_Redacted.pdf

²¹PETA. Animal use in OB/GYN physician residency training programs in the U.S. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/action/animal-use-in-ob-gyn-physician-residency-training-programs/>

After hearing from PETA, the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center wrote to us that “living animal models are no longer utilized in OB/GYN residency training program simulation activities.”²² According to records we’ve received, that school had previously used at least 13 pigs in recent OB/GYN training to perform laparoscopic hysterectomies, retroperitoneal dissections, and tissue morcellations.²³ Similarly, Aurora Sinai Medical Center²⁴ and Rush University²⁵—the latter of which received virtual reality software donated by PETA—both ended their use of live animals following talks with us. Furthermore, after discussions with us, Henry Ford Hospital published a new public policy on its webpage stating, “The OB/GYN residency program at Henry Ford Hospital does not use animals for training purposes, and instead uses advanced human patient simulators and other non-animal methods.”²⁶ Even the U.S. Department of Defense has banned the use of live animals for its OB/GYN physician residency training, instead using superior, human-relevant simulators.²⁷

This evidence indicates the growing shift in the field away from relying on crude training methods using live animals and toward using more human-relevant, effective, ethical, and economical animal-free models. For the sake of pigs, patients, and physicians in Portland, we hope you’ll urge OHSU to adopt a public policy prohibiting the use of live animals in its OB/GYN physician residency training program in favor of superior animal-free methods.

You can contact me at ShriyaS@peta.org. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,



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International Laboratory Methods Division
Laboratory Investigations Department

cc: Portland City Council Members

²²UT Southwestern. Response confirming no live animals used. August 15, 2023. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2023-08-15-no-live-animals-used.pdf>

²³UT Southwestern. Responsive Records. Accessed March 5, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2022-12-14-responsive-records-ut-southwestern.pdf>

²⁴PETA. Hospital swaps live pigs for tech in OB/GYN training after PETA talks. July 29, 2021. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/blog/victory-aurora-sinai-medical-center-wisconsin-replaces-live-pigs-high-tech-simulators/>

²⁵PETA. OB/GYN residents trade practice on live pigs for high-tech simulators. June 28, 2016. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.peta.org/blog/obgyn-residents-trade-practice-live-pigs-high-tech-simulators/>

²⁶Henry Ford Health. Obstetrics & Gynecology Residency. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.henryford.com/hcp/med-ed/residencies-fellowships/hfh/ob-gyn>

²⁷Kime P. Defense Department to reduce use of live animals for medical training. *Military Times*. November 13, 2014. Accessed September 9, 2024. <https://www.militarytimes.com/2014/11/13/defense-department-to-reduce-use-of-live-animals-for-medical-training/>