



December 9, 2024

Michael Richards, MD, MPA
Interim Executive Vice President
University of New Mexico Health Sciences

Via e-mail: MRichards@salud.unm.edu

Dear Interim Executive Vice President Richards:

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—PETA entities have over 9 million members and supporters globally, over 35,000 of whom live in New Mexico. The University of New Mexico Health Sciences (UNM Health Sciences) has maintained a Public Health Service-approved Animal Welfare Assurance for over 17 years. This assurance requires adherence to the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*, including implementing the 3Rs principle: replacing animal use whenever possible, reducing the number of animals used, and refining procedures to minimize suffering.

Despite this, the university continues to use thousands of animals in its laboratories. A recent inventory reported that UNM Health Sciences used more than 9,000 mice and rats in experiments. A 2023 federal report also documented the school's use of 117 hamsters, 9 rabbits, and 12 other animals covered under the Animal Welfare Act in its laboratories. These figures contradict the university's assertions of reducing animal use, revealing a troubling disregard for its stated intention to adopt non-animal replacements and reduce reliance on animal experimentation.

What exactly has UNM Health Sciences' plan to implement the 3Rs been, and what is your plan for next year, 2025? We believe the public has the right to know if the University's pledge has been truthful.

You must be aware that numerous studies dating back more than two decades reveal the failure of animal experiments to lead to cures and treatments for human beings. Conferences, papers, and all manner of information sources show the availability of countless superior, non-animal research methods that produce far more reliable and species-relevant results for human health than experiments on animals. PETA scientists' [Research Modernization Deal](#) provides a detailed strategy for replacing experiments on animals with humane and human-relevant methods. Have you read it, and what is your own plan to implement it or alternative solutions to this burgeoning use of animals on your campus?

In 2023, UNM Health Sciences received over \$73 million in taxpayer funding from the National Institutes of Health, with approximately half of that amount directed toward experiments on animals. Among these, 3-day-old mouse pups were exposed to alcohol vapors for four hours a day, supposedly to study the effects of alcohol exposure on brain development.

PEOPLE FOR
THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT
OF ANIMALS

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- PETA Germany
- PETA Switzerland
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

UNM Health Sciences' failure to adhere to the 3Rs principles undermines public trust. We ask you to address this matter of public interest without delay. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Alka Chandna, Ph.D.

Vice President

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